PARTISAN REVIEW

PR

MARCH-APRIL, 1941

MY FRIEND JAMES JOYCE

by

Eugene Jolas

IN THE PENAL COLONY

a long story by

Franz Kafka

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PARTISAN REVIEW

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My Friend James Joyce

Eugene Jolas

TO THOSE WHO KNEW HIM intimately, James Joyce was a human being of great warmth and charm, although, at first approach, his personality could seem almost forbidding. In fact, it took him some time to accept an easy comradeship in social intercourse. He often appeared to be on his guard, an attitude that was particularly noticeable during the period of excessive curiosity concerning him that followed the publication of *Ulysses*. But once he had given his friendship, nothing could swerve him from his granitic loyalty. He was never an ebullient man. His moments of silence and introspection frequently weighed, even, on his immediate surroundings. Then a profound pessimism, that seemed to hold him prisoner within himself, made him quite inaccessible to outsiders. Usually, however, among his intimates, there finally came a festive pause, when he would begin to dance and sing, or engage in barbed thrusts of wit; when he would show flashes of gayety and humor that could, on occasion, approach a kind of delirium.

He was never an easy conversationalist, and had a tendency to monosyllabic utterances. He did not relish being questioned directly on any subject. He never gave any interviews, and I was always careful not to quote him for publication. When he was in the mood, his talk, given in his mellifluous Dublin speech, was a ripple of illuminating ideas and words. Once he had left his anarchic and misanthropic taciturnity, he could enjoy the companionship of his friends, on whom, in some ways, he was very dependent, with a demonstration of good fellowship that brought out another facet of his nature. He eschewed all esotericism in his talk. Nor was he interested in high-flown abstractions, but engrossed rather by the drama of human relations, human behavior, human thought and customs. The range of subjects he enjoyed discussing was a wide one: poetry prodigiously remembered and faultlessly recited; music and musicians, especially singing, of which his technical knowledge was astonishing; the theatre, where his preferences went to Ibsen, Hauptmann, Scribe; the various lit-

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urgies; education; anthropology; philology; and certain sciences, particularly physics, geometry and mathematics. He was little interested in pure politics and economics, although he followed events faithfully.

I am conscious of difficulty in writing about him, for he was often amused by the articles that concerned his private life. He seemed to resent the constant macabre preoccupations with the condition of his eyes. Once, when I read a particularly inept piece about his personal habits, written in German, he said: "What are they writing about? *Es ist eben nichts zu malen.*" (There really is nothing to paint, anyway.) During the fourteen years of our association—which coincided with the writing of *Work in Progress,* or *Finnegans Wake*—I had many opportunities to observe his kindliness, his humor, his pathos. I saw his stoicism before fate. I saw him in moments of insouciance and in moments of distress. In spite of the frailty of his physique, there was a certain toughness in him which saw him through the ups and downs of his destiny. This tenacity was part of his honesty of conviction, his horror of cheap compromise, his fanatic belief in his own intellectual powers. His being was compact and fashioned by a will of steel. He was a man of deep tolerance, and objected to all denigrations of friends, or enemies, in his presence.

I met James Joyce for the first time in 1924, three years before I launched *transition.* It was at a rather dull banquet given at the Restaurant Marguéry in honor of Valery Larbaud, his first French friend and translator. (By a curious turn of fate, Larbaud was the last French writer Joyce saw anything of. While in Vichy, during the war, he went frequently to visit the now incurably ill author of *Barnabooth.*) Joyce was beaming in the aurole of *Ulysses,* and in a happy mood, when I was introduced to him. He thanked me courteously for something I had written about the book in a literary column I was then conducting for the Paris edition of the *Chicago Tribune.* We did not meet again until early in 1927, when I was preparing *transition* with Elliot Paul. We had approached Miss Sylvia Beach, his publisher, to ask her for a manuscript from Joyce, but with very little hope that anything would be forthcoming. Miss Beach consulted him, and within a few days we had the manuscript in our hands.

On a Sunday afternoon, in the winter of 1927, Joyce invited Mlle. Adrienne Monnier, Miss Sylvia Beach, my wife, Elliot Paul

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and myself to his home in the Square Robiac to listen to his reading of the manuscript in question. We listened to the Waterloo scene, which subsequently appeared in the first issue of the review. His voice was resonantly musical, and at times a smile went over his face, as he read a particularly exhilarating passage. After he had finished, he said: "What do you think of it? Did you like it?" We were all stirred by his verbal fantasy, excited, even, but puzzled. It was not easy to reply with conventional phrases. There was no precedent in literature for judging this fragment with its structure of multiple planes and its novelty of a poly-synthetic language. Some weeks later, he let me read the entire manuscript. It was not more than 120 pages long, and had been written, he said, within a few weeks during a stay on the Riviera in 1922. Yet it was already complete in itself, organically compressed, containing the outline of the entire saga. Even the title had been chosen, he indicated, but only he and Mrs. Joyce knew it. It was still a primitive version, to which he had already begun to add numberless paragraphs, phrases, words. In a moment of confidence he told me something about the genesis of the idea. His admirer, Miss Harriet Weaver—who, some years before, like a Maecenas of other days, made it possible for the struggling writer to be freed of financial worry—had asked him what book he was planning to write after *Ulysses*. He replied that now that *Ulysses* was done he considered himself as a man without a job. "I am like a tailor who would like to try his hand at making a new-style suit," he continued. "Will you order one?" Miss Weaver handed him a pamphlet written by a village priest in England and giving a description of a giant's grave found in the parish lot. "Why not try the story of this giant?" she asked jokingly. The giant's narrative became the story of Finn McCool, or *Finnegans Wake*.

The first issues of *transition* containing instalments from what was then known as *Work in Progress*—Joyce told me that this provisional title was the invention of Ford Madox Ford who had previously published a fragment in his *transatlantic review*—brought forth a fanfare of sensational outbursts. The confused critics in France, England and America snorted, for the most part, their violent disapproval. Miss Weaver herself regretfully wrote Miss Beach she feared Joyce was wasting his genius; an opinion which disturbed Joyce profoundly, for, after all, it was for her that the "tailor" was working. His friend Larbaud said he regarded

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the work as a *divertissement philologique* and of no great importance in Joyce's creative evolution. H. G. Wells wrote him that he still had a number of books to write and could not give the time to attempt to decipher Joyce's experiment. Ezra Pound attacked it in a letter and urged him to put it in the "family album," together with his poems. Only Edmund Wilson was intelligently sympathetic. After a while the reactions became more and more vehement, even personal, and on the whole journalistically stereotyped. Joyce continued working at his vision.

We saw a good deal of him during those years. Our office was not very far from his home, near the Eiffel Tower, and his urbane presence amid the disorder of our primitive hotel-room was always a welcome one. All his friends collaborated then in the preparations of the fragments destined for *transition:* Stuart Gilbert, Padraic Colum, Elliot Paul, Robert Sage, Helen and Giorgio Joyce, and others. He worked with painstaking care, almost with pedantry. He had invented an intricate system of symbols permitting him to pick out the new words and paragraphs he had been writing down for years, and which referred to the multiple characters in his creation. He would work for weeks, often late at night, with the help of one or the other of his friends. It seemed almost a collective composition in the end, for he let his friends participate in his inventive zeal, as they searched through numberless notebooks with mysterious reference points to be inserted in the text. When finished, the proof looked as if a coal-heaver's sooty hands had touched it. Once the work was done, we would dine with him at his favorite restaurant, the *Trianons,* where he liked the atmosphere and cuisine, and where he was sure to find his dry, golden *Chablis,* or, if the evening grew more hilarious than usual, an excellent Pommery champagne. His nearly whispered conversations never had any nuance of scatology, and whenever one of the more Rabelaisian of his companions would indulge in some too robust *gauloiserie,* he would deftly, almost impatiently, lead the dialogue into other channels. Sometimes he would bring with him a page he had written and hand it around the table with a gesture of polite modesty. He never explained his work, save through indirection.

At that time Joyce's family life was closely knit and happy, and his humor was a natural manifestation of this ambience. It did not yet have that mordant quality which it acquired in later years, after great sorrow had entered his home circle. And yet,

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even then, it was rather what André Breton has called somewhere, *un humour noir*. Later, he grew more asocial. But his friends succeeded in cheering him up. Once he celebrated, on the same day, his fiftieth birthday and the tenth anniversary of the publication of *Ulysses*. The events were hardly noticed by the literary world, which was then discovering social realism and considered Joyce outmoded. On that occasion, we gave a small dinner at our home in Paris attended by Mrs. Joyce, Thomas McGreavy, Samuel Beckett, Lucy and Paul Léon, Helen and Giorgio Joyce, and others. The birthday cake was decorated with an ingenious candy replica of a copy of *Ulysses*, in its blue jacket. Called on to cut the cake, Joyce looked at it a moment and said: "*Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes: Hoc est enim corpus meum.*" The talk at the table turned on the subject of popular sayings. Someone expressed a suspicion of all of them and gave voice to his dislike for the adage: *In Vino Veritas*, which he held to be untrue and bromidic. Joyce agreed warmly and added: "It should really be: *In Riso Veritas;* for nothing so reveals us as our laughter." He was always astonished that so few people had commented on the comic spirit in his writings.

I was preparing a short homage to him in *transition*, and had, among other features, ordered a sketch of Joyce by the Spanish artist, César Abin. The result was an impressive study of a distinguished *homme de lettres*, with pen in hand, his own volumes reverentially piled beside him. But Joyce would have none of it, and insisted on giving the cartoonist precise instructions for the design and execution of the job. He wanted it, first of all, to look like a question mark, because friends had told him once that his figure resembled a question mark, when seen standing meditatively on a street corner. For more than two weeks he kept adding new suggestions, until he was finally satisfied with it. He asked to be drawn with a battered old derby hung with spider webs and bearing a ticket on which was inscribed the fatal number 13. He asked that a star be put on the tip of his nose, in memory of a criticaster's description of him as a "blue-nosed comedian"; that his feet be suspended perilously over a globe called Ireland, on which only Dublin was visible; that he have patches on the knees of his trousers; that out of his pockets there should emerge the manuscript of a song entitled: *Let me like a soldier fall*. For his "luck," his "fate," had already started down the sombre path it never left again. It

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was as though he had a premonition of the immense trials that lay before him. It was during this period that he suggested that we plan a *bal de la purée*—which is French slang for general insolvency—since the depression was beginning to be felt in Paris more and more. The gayest of the guests was Joyce himself, who finally inveigled all the ladies present to give him the first prize for his costume: that of an old Irish stage character famous once as *Handy Andy*.

At that time, the sudden death of his father came to him as a profound shock. He had never made any bones about his great affection for his father, and the autobiographical elements of his work reveal this in numberless symbolical and mythological allusions. *Ulysses* was man in search of his father, and *Finnegans Wake* is once again the expression of that filial quest. In those days, he dreamed much about him, and one evening he said suddenly: "I hear my father talking to me. I wonder where he is." Sometimes he would tell picaresque tales of his father's wit, and the last one I remember was one that concerned his father's reaction in Dublin to a miniscule sketch of him made by Brancusi. It was merely a geometrical spiral study symbolizing the ear. "Well, Jim hasn't changed much," said his father on seeing the portrait.

During the summer and fall of 1931 his daughter Lucia suffered a nervous collapse, and we spent several months with the Joyce family in a little frontier town in the mountains of Austria. Joyce had not been writing for some time, due, partly, to the intense worry he felt over his daughter's condition, partly to the general mood of inertia caused by the depression. So we took long walks together along the swirling mountain river Ill, nearby, or we climbed the wooded hills. He had a deep love for mountains and rivers, because, he said, "They are the phenomena that will remain when all the peoples and their governments will have vanished." Yet he was not at all a nature romantic. He was rather a man of the megapolis. Towards dusk, after a siesta, he would go walking again. Eight o'clock was the hour he had set for himself many decades before as the time for his first glass of wine of the day. That summer he evolved a sort of ritual which, to me, had an almost grotesque fascination. At half past seven, he would race suddenly for the railroad station, where the Paris-Vienna Express was due to stop for ten minutes each day. He would quietly walk up and down the platform. "Over on those tracks there," he said

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one evening, "the fate of *Ulysses* was decided in 1915." He referred to the fact that in this Austrian town of the border he had almost been prevented by some jinx from crossing into Switzerland during the first World War. When the train finally came in, he rushed to the nearest car in order to examine the French, German and Yugo-Slav inscriptions, palped the letters with the sensitive fingers of defective vision. Then he would ask me questions about the persons getting on or off the train. He would try to listen to their conversations. His fine ear for dialectal nuances in German often astonished me. When the train continued on its way into the usually foggy night, he stood on the platform waving his hat, as if he had just bid godspeed to a dear friend. With eight o'clock approaching, he almost skipped back to the hotel, for his first draught of *Tischwein*—or, as Mrs. Joyce, who thought the drink of rather inferior quality, used to say, *dishwine*.

After a while I started making preparations for a new issue of *transition*, and this stimulated him to work. He attacked the problem with savage energy. "How difficult it is to put pen to paper again," he said, one evening. "Those first sentences have cost me a great deal of pain." But gradually the task was in hand. It was to be known later as *The Mime of Mick, Nick and the Maggies*. He wrote steadily on this fragment during those frenetic months, constantly interrupted by moments of anxiety about the health of his daughter, and his own resultant nervousness. At his hotel, where we would work in the afternoon, he gave me a densely written foolscap sheet beginning with the words: "Every evening at lighting up o'clock sharp and until further notice . . ." which I typed for him. After a few pages had thus been transcribed, we began to look through the note-books—which he lugged around on all his travels —and the additions, set down years before for a still unwritten text he had merely outlined in his mind, became more and more numerous. The manuscript grew into thirty pages and was not yet finished. He never changed a single word. There was always a certain inevitability, an almost volcanic affirmativeness about his primal choice of words. To me, his deformations seemed to grow more daring. He added, ceaselessly, like a worker in mosaic, enriching his original pattern with ever new inventions.

"There really is no coincidence in this book," he said during one of our walks. "I might easily have written this story in the traditional manner. . . . Every novelist knows the recipe. . . . It is

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not very difficult to follow a simple, chronological scheme which the critics will understand. . . . But I, after all, am trying to tell the story of this Chapelizod family in a new way. . . . Time and the river and the mountain are the real heroes of my book. . . . Yet the elements are exactly what every novelist might use: man and woman, birth, childhood, night, sleep, marriage, prayer, death. . . . There is nothing paradoxical about this. . . . Only I am trying to build many planes of narrative with a single esthetic purpose. . . . Did you ever read Laurence Sterne . . . ?"

We read Goethe's *Farbenlehre*, but he finally said he could use nothing from it. He was interested in a comic version of the theodicy, and he asked me to get one of the Jesuits nearby to give me an Augustinian text. There was a famous Jesuit school in the town, and he occasionally reminisced about his Dublin days with the fathers. But his anti-religious convictions were unshakable. I had come back from a talk with his daughter who seemed to be interested in knowing something about Catholic dogma. Joyce, on hearing this, grew suddenly quite violent and said: "Why should a young woman bother her head about such things? Buddha and Confucius and all the others were not able to understand anything about it. We know nothing, and never shall know anything. . . ." He discussed Vico's theory of the origin of language. The conception of the cyclical evolution of civilizations born from each other like the phoenix from the ashes haunted him. He began to speculate on the new physics, and the theory of the expanding universe. And while walking with him, I always had the impression that he was not really in an Austrian frontier town, but in Dublin, and that everything he thought and wrote was about his native land.

He completed the *Mime* in Zurich, after our return there. We used to take a motorboat in the late afternoon and go out on the lake. Or else we would go walking up hill to the Zoo, where one evening he suddenly quoted to me the magnificent nocturne of Phoenix Park, with the verbal magic of animal sounds dying off in the gathering night. Or else we would walk up and down the *Bahnhofstrasse*, and I would think of his poem about this street. He would talk about his World War experiences in the Swiss town, and chat about old friends, especially his English friend, Frank Budgen, who was his companion in those days. Then we would dine at the *Kronenhalle*, which he now preferred to the more colorful *Zum Pfauen* that had been his *Stammlokal* in

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the old days. His guests were the few friends he had in Zurich: Dr. Bernard Fehr, of the University; Dr. Borach, and Mr. Edouard Brauchbar, English pupils during the first World War; Dr. and Mrs. S. Giedion. He was very fond of the Swiss *fondant* wine from the *Valais,* and we often left the restaurant in a grape-happy mood.

A British clipping came saying that Joyce was trying to revive Swift's *little language* to Stella. "Not at all," said Joyce to me. "I am using a *Big Language.*" He said one evening: "I have discovered that I can do anything with language I want." His linguistic memory was extraordinary. He seemed constantly *à l'affut,* always to be listening rather than talking. "Really, it is not I who am writing this crazy book," he said in his whimsical way one evening. "It is you, and you, and you, and that man over there, and that girl at the next table." One day I found him in a Zurich tea-shop laughing quietly to himself. "Did you win *le gros lot?*" I asked. He said he had asked the servant girl for a glass of lemon squash. The somewhat obtuse Swiss girl looked puzzled. Then she had an inspiration: "Oh, you mean *Lebensquatsch?*", she stammered. (Her German neologism might be translated by: life's piffle!) Joyce retained all such scraps of conversation, lopped-off syllables said in moments of inertia or fatigue, *jeux de mots,* alcoholically deformed words, slips of the tongue—all the verbal grotesques and fantasies which he heard issuing in unconscious moments. His knowledge of French, German, modern Greek and especially Italian stood him in good stead, and he added constantly to that stock of information by studying Hebrew, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Finnish and other tongues. At the bottom of his vocabulary was also an immense command of Anglo-Irish words that only seem like neologisms to us today, because they have, for the most part, become obsolete. His revival of these will some day interest the philologists. Language to him was a social as well as a subjective process. He was deeply interested in the experiments of the French Jesuit, Jousse, and the English philologist, Paget, and *Finnegans Wake* is full of strange applications of their gesture theory. He often talked with a derisive smile of the auxiliary languages, among them Esperanto and Ido.

Back in Paris he became more and more absorbed by meditations on the imaginative creation. He read Coleridge and was interested in the distinction he made between imagination and

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fancy. He wondered if he himself had imagination. As the political horizon in Europe grew more threatening, his high Olympian neutrality asserted itself more and more. In those days I remember reading to him a German translation from a speech by Radek in which the Russian attacked *Ulysses*, at the Congress of Kharkov, as being without a social conscience. "Well," said Joyce, "all the characters in my books belong to the lower middle classes, and even the working class; and they are all quite poor." He began to read *Wuthering Heights*. "This woman had pure imagination," he said. "Kipling had it too, and certainly Yeats." His admiration for the Irish poet was very great. A recent commentator, asserting that Joyce lacked reverence for the logos in poetry, inferred that he had little regard for Yeats. I can assure the gentleman that this was not true. Joyce often recited Yeats' poems to us from memory. "No surrealist poet can equal this for imagination," he said. Once when Yeats spoke over the radio, he invited us to listen in with him. I read *The Vision* to him, and he was deeply absorbed by the colossal conception, only regretting that "Yeats did not put all this into a creative work." At Yeats' death he sent a wreath to his grave at Antibes, and his emotion, on hearing of the poet's passing, was moving to witness. He always denied too that he had said to Yeats that he was too old to be influenced by him.

Joyce had a passion for the irrational manifestations of life. Yet there was nothing in common between his attitude and that of the surrealists and psychoanalysts. Nor did his experiments have anything to do with those of the German romantics who explored the mysticism of the individual world. Joyce was an intensely conscious observer of the unconscious drama. During walks in Paris, we often talked about dreams. Sometimes I related to him my own dreams which, during the pre-war years began to take on a strangely fantastic, almost apocalyptic silhouette. He was always eager to discuss them, because they interested him as images of the nocturnal universe. He himself, he said, dreamed relatively little, but when he did, his dreams were usually related to ideas, personal and mythic, with which he was occupied in his waking hours. He was very much attracted by Dunn's theory of *serialism*, and I read to him that author's brilliant *A Theory with Time* which Joyce regarded highly. He told me one of his dreams, and subsequent events seemed to confirm Dunn's multi-dimensional conceptions.

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He was walking through a big city and met three men who called themselves Minos, Eaque and Rhadamante. They suddenly broke off their conversation with him and became threatening. He had to run to escape from their screams of obloquy. Three weeks later I noticed a feature story in the *Paris-Soir* to the effect that the police were looking for a crank who was sending explosives through the mails. This fanatic signed himself: Minos, Eaque, Rhadamante, the judges of Hell. One of Joyce's less complicated dreams, however, caused considerable chuckling, each time he thought of it. This was a dream the climax of which was the titanic figure of Molly Bloom, seated on the side of a high hill. "As for you, James Joyce, I've had enough of you," she shouted. His reply he never remembered.

Some six months before *Work in Progress* was scheduled to appear, there was an amusing incident in connection with its title, then still known only to Mr. and Mrs. Joyce. Often he had challenged his friends to guess it. He even made a permanent offer to pay 1,000 francs in cash to the person who would guess it. We all tried: Stuart Gilbert, Herbert Gorman, Samuel Beckett, Paul Leon, myself, but we failed miserably. One summer night, while dining on the terrace of Fouquet's, Joyce repeated his offer. The Riesling was especially good that night, and we were in high spirits. Mrs. Joyce began an Irish song about Mr. Flannigan and Mrs. Shannigan. Joyce looked startled and urged her to stop. This she did, but when he saw no harm had been done, he very distinctly, as a singer does it, made the lip motions which seemed to indicate F and W. My wife's guess was *Fairy's Wake.* Joyce looked astonished and said "Brava! But something is missing." For a few days we mulled over it. One morning I knew it was *Finnegans Wake,* although it was only an intuition. That evening I suddenly threw the words into the air. Joyce blanched. Slowly he set down the wine-glass he held. "Ah, Jolas, you've taken something out of me," he said, almost sadly. When we parted that night, he embraced me, danced a few of his intricate steps, and asked: "How would you like to have the money?" I replied: "In sous." The following morning, during my absence from home, he arrived with a bag filled with ten franc pieces. He gave them to my daughters with instructions to serve them for me at lunch. So it was *Finnegans Wake.* All those present were sternly enjoined by Joyce not to

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reveal it, and we kept it a secret until he made the official announcement at his birthday dinner on the following February 2nd.

The reception given this labour of seventeen years was to be a disappointing one. Among the few whose analysis struck him as being comprehensive and conscientious were, in rough order of his appreciation, William Troy's essay in *Partisan Review*, Harry Levin's article in *New Directions*, Edmund Wilson's essays in the *New Republic*, Alfred Kazin's review in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, and Padraic Colum's piece in the *New York Times*, as well as one or two from England and Scotland. From Ireland there was little reaction, and the reception in France, on which he had counted so much, was lamentable. This state of affairs was a source of deep depression during the last year of his life, and was responsible, more than anything else, for the fact that he was completely indifferent to any suggestion for a future work.

For Joyce himself, *Finnegans Wake* had prophetic significance. Finn McCool, the Finnish-Norwegian-Irish hero of the tale, seemed to him to be coming alive again after the publication of the book, and in a letter from France I received from him last spring, he said: ". . . It is strange, however, that after publication of my book, Finland came into the foreground suddenly. First by the awarding of the Nobel Prize to a Finnish writer, and then by the political door. The most curious comment I have received on the book is a symbolical one from Helsinki, where, as foretold by the prophet, the Finn again wakes, and volunteer Buckleys are hurrying from all sides to shoot that Russian general. . . ." "Prophetic too were the last pages of my book . . ." he added in this same letter. The last pages, that had cost him such profound anguish at the time of their writing. "I felt so completely exhausted," he told me when it was done, "as if all the blood had run out of my brain. I sat for a long while on a street bench, unable to move . . ."

"And it's old and old it's sad and old it's sad and weary I go back to you, my cold father, my cold, mad father, my cold mad feary father, till the near sight of the mere size of him, the moyles and moyles of it, moananoaning, makes me seasilt saltsick and I rush, my only, into your arms. . . ."

There was no turning back after these lines, my friend. You knew it well. Adew!

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Karl J. Shapiro

WASHINGTON CATHEDRAL

From summer and the wheel-shaped city
That sweats like a swamp and wrangles on
Its melting streets, white mammoth Forums,
And political hotels with awnings, caryatids;
Past barricaded embassies with trees
That shed trash and parch his sight,
To here, the acres of superior quiet,
Shadow and damp, the tourist comes,
And, cooled by stones and darkness, stares.

Tall as a lover's night, the nave
Broods over him, irradiates,
And stars of color out of painted glass
Shoot downward on apostles and on chairs
Huddled by hundreds under altar rails.
Yet it is only Thursday; there are no prayers.

But exclamations. The lady invokes by name
The thousand-odd small sculptures, spooks,
New angels, pitted roods; she gives
The inventory of relics to his heart
That aches with history and astonishment:
He gives a large coin to a wooden coffer.

Outside, noon blazes in his face like guns.
He goes down by the Bishop's walk, the dial,
The expensive grass, the Byzantine bench,
While stark behind him a red naked crane
Hangs over the unfinished transept,
A Cubist hen rivalling the Gothic school.

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Whether he sees the joke; whether he cares;
Whether he tempts a vulgar miracle,
Some deus ex machina, this is his choice,
A shrine of whispers and tricky penumbras.
  Therefore he votes again for the paid
Clergy, the English hint, the bones of Wilson
Crushed under tons of fake magnificence.
  Nor from the zoo of his instincts
  Come better than crude eagles: now
He cannot doubt that violent obelisk
And Lincoln whittled to a fool's colossus.
This church and city triumph in his eyes.
He is only a good alien, nominally happy.

Harvey Breit

LINES TO THE YOUNG EVERYWHERE

Called, he went to them.
He took the grave they named for him.

Not yet a boy, the man is done
And the bonfires of his gloom.

Say what incalculable gain defined this end:
The frigid breast in the thick-lipped wind.

No more, he is no more, yet hardly gone:
A wave upon a shore that touched a stone.

Deep his mother across his eyes has gone.
Ashes on a turning sand are less forlorn.

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Jean Garrigue

BALLAD FOR HALF HEARTS

The time for thinking is useless,
The time for acting is done;
It seems in this noisy city
Girded by tracks and by rivers
Not even the sky is natural
With its supple, escaping clouds.

What acting and thinking was done
Was acting that brought us to this.
Wrong bred wrong after wrong,
Every motive was cancerous.
Now we flee from the terraces
Under the ageing heat of the sun.

The loving of splendid limbs
Led but to fruitless fruit;
Mercy and pride carried a mutual
Disease; the blight was transferred
From us to the object; daily
The Promethean wound is consciousness we cannot curb.

Now, retreating from the fire-escape grills
And the virtuous, housewife washing,
We draw down the blinds on our fear and our shame.
The heart, that animal pump, rises
And sinks in the dark, venially pushing
Our blood to its base unfulfillment.

Such evil should stop, we know that,
As we know how the city rots in space.
We put on our clothes of rejection,
O bridegroom, we lie down in our misery,
And the trust we abandoned witnesses
The multiple murders.

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Next morning you'll see us alive
Healthy as usual behind our windows;
Every sinew is old and our voices shrivelled
But we have survived the selling and living with lies
As our fathers survived their fathers' betrayal,
As we ourselves, by our fear, breed the moribund future.

Milton Kaplan

THE SLEEPER

He stirs a little, smiles, and stretches out
Luxuriously—he can sleep when rain
Claws at the heaving flanks of window pane
And fang-toothed ice clings to the trembling house
Relentlessly, for sleep comes doubly sweet
When maddened wind tears at the walls with shriek
Of rage, and races madly round and round
To rake the huddled house with talon-sound,
And danger snarls until the man is warm
With peace as he lies snugly there with storm
Outside and him inside and safe from harm.

And all the red brick words are mortared tight;
The wooden words fit firmly, joint in joint,
And glass may rattle but it holds the night
At bay outside, and peace flares bright to print
Its shadow on the wall.

And there he sleeps
In blanket words wrapped thick to keep him warm,
But bolted door is only wood, and wood
Can rot; the bricks can crumble; glass can break,
So he must lie on straw to prick his sleep
Astir before the white teeth of the storm
Are in his throat. Who sleeps on feather words,
Beware! he sleeps too well; he may not wake.

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In The Penal Colony

Franz Kafka

"IT'S A CURIOUS MACHINE," said the officer to the explorer, and despite the fact that he was well acquainted with the apparatus, he nevertheless looked at it with a certain admiration, as it were. It was apparently merely out of courtesy that the explorer had accepted the invitation of the commanding officer to attend the execution of a private soldier condemned for disobedience and insulting a superior officer. Nor did there appear to be great interest in this execution in the penal colony. At any rate, here in the deep, sandy little valley shut in on every side by naked slopes, there were present, beside the officer and the explorer, only the condemned man—an obtuse, wide-mouthed fellow, with neglected face and hair—and a soldier acting as guard. The latter held the heavy chain to which were attached the little chains that fettered the offender's ankles and wrists as well as his neck, and which were themselves linked together by connecting chains. As a matter of fact, however, the condemned man looked so dog-like and submissive, one had the impression that he might be allowed to run freely about the slopes, and that, when the execution was about to begin, one would have only to whistle for him to come right back.

The explorer had little thought for the apparatus and started walking up and down behind the condemned man with almost visible indifference. Meanwhile, the officer began the final preparations, now crawling beneath the machine, which was built deep in the ground, now climbing a ladder in order to inspect the upper parts. These were tasks which could easily have been left to a mechanic, but the officer performed them with great zeal, either because he was a special advocate of this apparatus, or because for other reasons the work could not be entrusted to anyone else. "Now everything's ready," he finally called out and climbed down the ladder. He was exceedingly fatigued, breathing with his mouth wide open, and had stuck two dainty lady's handkerchiefs under

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the collar of his uniform. "These uniforms are much too heavy for the tropics," commented the explorer instead of making inquiries about the machine, as the officer had expected him to do. "Certainly," said the officer, washing his hands, stained with oil and grease, in a pail of water that stood ready nearby, "but they are the symbols of home, and we don't want to lose our homeland." "But take a look at this machine," he added immediately, as he dried his hands with a towel, pointing at the same time to the apparatus. "Up till now, it still had to be worked by hand; now it works entirely alone." The explorer nodded and followed the officer. The latter, wanting to safeguard himself against all eventualities, said: "Of course disturbances do occur; I hope there will be none today, yet we must always reckon with one. For the apparatus has to run for twelve consecutive hours. But if there should be any disturbances, they will only be insignificant ones, and they will be repaired at once."

"Don't you want to sit down?" he finally asked, and choosing a wicker chair from a heap of others, he offered it to the explorer, who could not refuse. He was now sitting on the edge of a pit, into which he cast a fugitive glance. It was not very deep. On one side of the pit the turned-up earth had been heaped into a wall: on the other side stood the machine. "I don't know," said the officer, "if the commanding officer has already explained the apparatus to you." The explorer made a vague gesture of the hand; the officer asked nothing better, for now he could explain the apparatus himself. "This machine," he said, grasping the crankshaft, on which he was leaning, "is an invention of our former commanding officer. I collaborated with him in the early experiments and took part in all the stages of the work up till the end. But credit for the invention belongs to him alone. Have you ever heard of our former commander? No? Well, I'm not exaggerating when I say that the organizing of the entire penal colony is his work. We who were his friends knew already, at the time of his death, that the organization of the colony was so complete in itself, that his successor, even though he were to have a thousand new ideas in his head, would not be able to change anything for many years to come, at least. What we foresaw has come about: the new commander has had to recognize this. It's too bad you did not know the former commander. But"—here the officer interrupted himself, "here I am gabbling

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away, and his apparatus is standing right here before us. It consists, as you see, of three parts. In the course of time, each of these parts has come to be designated by certain folk names, as it were. The lower one is called the 'bed,' the upper one the 'draughtsman,' and the middle one hanging up there is called the 'harrow'." "The harrow?" asked the explorer. He had not been listening with undivided attention; the sun was much too tightly ensnared in the shadowless valley; it was hard to concentrate one's thoughts. The officer seemed to him all the more admirable, therefore, as he explained his cause so zealously, in his tight dress uniform, heavy with epaulets and hung with gold braid. Moreover, as he spoke he was busying himself with a screwdriver, tightening a screw here and there. The soldier seemed to be in a state of mind similar to that of the explorer. He had tied the condemned man's chain around both his wrists and was now leaning with one hand on his gun, his head drooping from the nape of his neck, indifferent to everything. The explorer was not surprised by this, for the officer was speaking French and certainly neither the soldier nor the condemned man understood French. It was, therefore, all the more striking that the condemned man should nevertheless have made an effort to follow the explanations of the officer. With a kind of sleepy perseverance he continued to direct his glance where the officer happened to be pointing. When the latter was now interrupted by a question from the explorer, he, too, looked, as did the officer, at the explorer.

"Yes, harrow," said the officer. "It's a suitable name. The needles are arranged as in a harrow and the whole thing is worked like a harrow, although always on the same spot, and much more artistically. You'll understand it right away, anyhow. The condemned man is laid here on the bed. — But I shall first of all describe the apparatus, and after that, I'll get the operation itself under way. You will then be able to follow it more easily. Also, there is a cog-wheel in the draughtsman which has gotten too worn down; it makes a creaking noise when it runs so that a person can hardly understand what is being said. Spare parts are hard to get here, too, unfortunately. — Well, then, as I said, here's the bed. It is entirely covered with a layer of cotton, the purpose of which you will learn later on. The condemned man is laid on this cotton, belly down and naked, of course; these straps for the hands, these for the

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feet, these for the throat, so as to fasten him tight. Here, at the head of the bed where, as I said, the man first lies on his face, there is this little ball of felt, which can be easily adjusted so that it goes right into the man's mouth. Its purpose is to prevent his screaming and biting his tongue. Of course, the man must take hold of the ball of felt since, otherwise, his neck would be broken by the throat-straps." "Is this cotton?" asked the explorer, bending forward. "Why certainly," said the officer smiling, "just feel it yourself." He seized the explorer's hand and guided it across the bed. "It's a specially prepared cotton, that's why it looks so unfamiliar; I'll have something to say about its purpose later on." The explorer was already won over a little in favor of the apparatus; he put his hands over his eyes as a protection against the sun and looked up at it. It was a large structure. The bed and the draughtsman were of equal dimensions and looked like two dark chests. The draughtsman was placed about two meters above the bed; both were connected at the corners by four brass poles which almost gave forth rays in the sunlight. The harrow was hanging between the chests, on a steel band.

The officer had hardly noticed the explorer's earlier indifference; he became aware, however, that his interest was now awakening; he therefore interrupted his explanations to give the explorer time for undisturbed contemplation. The condemned man imitated the explorer; since he could not place his hand over his eyes, he blinked directly upward.

"So the man lies down," said the explorer, and he leaned back in his arm-chair, crossing his legs.

"Yes," said the officer, pushing his cap back a little and passing his hand over his hot face, "now listen! Both the bed and the draughtsman have their own electric batteries; the bed needs one for itself, the draughtsman one for the harrow. As soon as the man has been strapped down, the bed is put in motion. It quivers simultaneously from side to side, as well as up and down, in tiny, very rapid vibrations. You will probably have seen similar machines in hospitals; only, in the case of our bed, all the motions are very precisely calculated; for they have to be painstakingly accorded to the motions of the harrow. But the execution proper of the sentence is left to this harrow."

"What is the sentence, anyway?" asked the explorer. "So

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you don't know that, either?" said the officer with astonishment, biting his lips. "Please excuse me; if my explanations are perhaps a bit disjointed, I sincerely beg your pardon. For these explanations were formerly given by the commanding officer; the new commander, however, has shunned this duty of rank; but that he should have failed to enlighten such an important visitor"—the explorer sought to wave away the mark of honor with both hands, but the officer insisted on the expression—"such an important visitor, about the form of our sentence, is another innovation which—," he had a curse on his lips, but restrained himself and said: "I was not informed, it is not my fault. As a matter of fact, I am the best qualified to explain our ways of judging, for I carry here"—he tapped his breast-pocket—"the original drawings on the subject, made by the former commander."

"Drawings made by the commander himself?" asked the explorer. "Did he combine everything in his own person? Was he a soldier, a judge, a builder, a chemist, a draughtsman, all in one?"

"Surely," said the officer, nodding his head with a fixed, meditative expression. Then he examined his hands: they did not seem to him to be clean enough to touch the drawings; so he went to the pail and washed them once more. Then he took out a small leather brief-case. "Our sentence does not sound severe," he said. "The law which the condemned man broke is written on his body with the harrow. For instance, this offender"—the officer pointed to the condemned man—"will have inscribed on his body: 'HONOR YOUR SUPERIOR'."

The explorer gave a fleeting glance at the man; when the officer pointed towards him, he hung his head and seemed to be concentrating all his powers of hearing on finding out something. But the motions of his tightly pressed, puffy lips showed clearly that he could understand nothing. The explorer had wanted to ask various questions but at the sight of the man he only asked: "Does he know his sentence?" "No," the officer said, and wanted to go right ahead with his explanations. But the explorer interrupted him: "So he does not know his sentence?" No," said the officer again, and he hesitated a moment, as if demanding further justification of his question from the explorer. "It would be useless to announce it to him," he said, "he'll learn it anyway, on his own body." The explorer was inclined to remain silent, when he

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felt the condemned man's gaze upon him; it seemed to be asking if he could approve of the procedure described. So the explorer, who had already leaned back, bent forward once more and asked: "But he certainly must know that he has been condemned, doesn't he?" "He doesn't know that either," said the officer, smiling at the explorer, as if expecting further strange disclosures. "Well, then," said the explorer, passing his hand over his forehead, "so this man still does not know how his defense was undertaken?" "He had no opportunity of defending himself," said the officer, and looked to one side, as if he were talking to himself and did not want to embarrass the explorer by telling these things which seemed to him self-evident. "But he must surely have had a chance to defend himself?" said the explorer, rising from the arm-chair.

The officer realized that he was in danger of being held up for some time in his explanation of the apparatus. So he walked over to the explorer, took his arm, pointed towards the condemned man who, seeing that interest was so obviously directed his way, now stood at attention, while the guard drew the chain tighter. "The situation is as follows," said the officer. "I was appointed judge in the penal colony, despite my youth. For I was assistant to the former commander in all punitive matters and I am the one who knows the machine best. The principle on which I base my decisions is this: There is never any doubt about the guilt! Other courts cannot follow this principle, for they consist of many heads and also have still higher courts over them. Such is not the case here, or at least it was not the case with our former commander. To be sure, the new commander has already shown an inclination to meddle with my decisions, but I have always succeeded so far in warding him off, and I shall continue to do so. — You wanted an explanation of this case: it is as simple as all of them. The captain notified us this morning that this man, who had been assigned to his personal service and who slept in front of his door, had fallen asleep while on duty. For it is his duty to get up each time the hour strikes and salute before the captain's door. This is certainly not a difficult duty, but it is a necessary one, for he must be alert while on guard as well as while serving his superior. Last night the captain wanted to see if the servant was doing his duty. He opened the door at two o'clock sharp and found him asleep in a crouching position. He took his riding whip and lashed the man

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across the face. Now, instead of getting up and asking forgiveness, the man seized his superior by the legs, shook him, and shouted: "Throw that whip away, or I'll eat you up." These are the facts. The captain came to me an hour ago. I wrote down his statement and added the sentence immediately. Then I ordered the man to be put in chains. That was all very simple. If I had called the man first and questioned him, it would have only resulted in confusion. He would have lied, then, if I had succeeded in contradicting the first lies, he would have replaced these with new ones, and so forth. But now I've got hold of him, and I'll not let him go. — Is everything clear now? But time passes, the execution should have begun, and I am not yet through with the explanation of the apparatus." He forced the explorer back into his arm-chair, went back over to the machine and began: "As you see, this harrow corresponds to the form of a human being; here is the harrow for the upper part of the body, here are the harrows for the legs. For the head, this little burin alone is designated. Have I made myself clear?" He bent amiably towards the explorer, prepared to give the most exhaustive explanations.

The explorer looked at the harrow with wrinkled forehead. The information about the court proceedings had not satisfied him. After all, he was forced to tell himself, this was a penal colony; special measures were necessary here, and they were obliged to proceed according to military regulations up to the very last detail. Besides, he placed some hope in the new commander who obviously intended to introduce—slowly, to be sure—a new procedure which could not penetrate the limited mind of this officer. This train of thought led the explorer to ask: "Is the commander going to attend the execution?" "That's not certain," said the officer, painfully affected by the unmotivated question, and his friendly expression became distorted. "That's exactly why we have to hurry," he continued, "I shall even have to cut my explanations short, as much as I regret to do so. But then I might add further explanations tomorrow, when the apparatus will have been cleaned again—the fact that it gets so dirty is its only defect. So now I'll give you only the most essential facts. — When the man lies on the bed and it has been made to vibrate, the harrow is lowered onto the body. Of itself it assumes a position that permits the sharp points just barely to touch the body; once it is in place, this steel cord tautens at once

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into a rod. And then the play begins. The uninitiated notice no external difference in the penalties. The harrow appears to be working uniformly. Tremblingly it sticks its points into the body, which has begun to tremble too, because of the bed. To make it possible for everyone to verify the execution of the sentence, the harrow was made of glass. A few technical difficulties had to be surmounted in order to fasten the needles into it, but we finally succeeded after many attempts. We simply spared no pains. And now everyone can watch the progress of the writing on the body through the glass. Would you mind coming nearer to look at the needles?"

Slowly the explorer rose, walked over and bent over the harrow. "You can see," said the officer, "two kinds of needles in different arrangements. Each long one has a short one next to it. For the long one writes and the short one sprays water in order to wash off the blood, and so keep the writing always clear. The bloody water is then conducted into little drains and finally flows into this principal drain which has an overflow pipe leading into the ditch." The officer pointed out the exact direction which the blood-water had to take. As he held both hands to the mouth of the overflow-pipe in order to best illustrate his point, the explorer lifted his head and, groping behind him, was about to return to his seat. At that moment he saw to his horror that the condemned man, like himself, had acted on the invitation of the officer to inspect closely the construction of the harrow. He had dragged the drowsy guard a little way forward with his chain, and was also bending over the glass. He could be seen looking with uncertain eyes for the thing the two gentlemen had just been examining but, because he lacked the explanation, he was not successful. He bent first to one side, then to the other. Again and again his eye roved over the glass. The explorer wanted to push him back, for what he was doing was probably punishable. But the officer held the explorer back with one hand, took a clod of earth from the ditch with the other and threw it at the guard. The latter lifted his eyes suddenly, saw what the condemned man had dared do, let his gun drop and, digging his heels into the ground, he wrenched the condemned man back so that he fell right over. The guard looked down at the man as he writhed and clanked his chains. "Stand him up straight!" the officer shouted, for he noticed that the explorer's attention was far

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too diverted by the offender. What's more, the explorer was bending across the harrow, without bothering about it, intent only on finding out what was going to happen to the condemned man. "Handle him carefully," the officer shouted again. He ran around the apparatus, seized the condemned man, whose feet kept slipping from under him, by the shoulders and stood him upright, with the help of the guard.

"Now I know everything," said the explorer when the officer came back to him again. "Except the most important part," said the latter and grasping the explorer by the arm, he pointed upward; "There, in the draughtsman is the clock-work that determines the motions of the harrow, and this clock-work is regulated according to the drawing called for by the sentence. I still use the sketches made by the former commanding officer. Here they are,"—he pulled a few sheets out of his leather brief-case—"but unfortunately I cannot let you take them in your hand, for they are my most precious possession. Please sit down, I'll show them to you from this distance, so that you may see everything well." He showed him the first page. The explorer would have liked to say a word of approval, but he only saw labyrinthine lines that frequently crossed and re-crossed each other and covered the paper so densely that one could recognize only with difficulty the white spaces in between. "Please read this," said the officer. "I can't," said the explorer. "Why, it's perfectly clear," said the officer. "It's undoubtedly very artistic," said the explorer evasively, "but I cannot decipher it." "Of course," said the officer laughing, as he put the brief-case away, "It's not fine penmanship for school-children. You have to pore over it for a long while. In the end, you too would certainly make it out. Naturally it can't be ordinary handwriting, for it is not supposed to kill at once, but within an average space of twelve hours; the turning point being calculated for the sixth hour. The writing proper has to be surrounded by many, many embellishments; the real writing only encircles the body in a narrow girdle; the rest of the body is intended for decorative effects. Can you now understand the value of the work of the harrow, and of the entire machine? Just look at this!" He jumped onto the ladder, turned a wheel and called down: "Look out! step aside!" Everything began to move. If the wheel had not creaked, it would have been wonderful. As if surprised by this disturbing wheel, the

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officer threatened it with his fist, then, excusing himself, stretched his arms out towards the explorer and hurriedly climbed down in order to observe the action of the apparatus from below. Something was still out of order which he alone noticed. He climbed up again, grasped the inner part of the draughtsman with both hands and then, in order to get down quickly, instead of using the ladder, slid down one of the rods. To make himself understood above the noise, he shouted as loudly as possible into the ear of the explorer: "Do you understand what's happening now? The harrow is beginning to write: when it has finished the first inscription on the man's back, the layer of cotton begins to furl up and rolls the body slowly over on its side so as to present a fresh surface to the harrow. In the meantime, the wound-written parts take their place on the cotton, which stops the bleeding at once, by means of a special preparation, and makes further deepening of the writing possible. Just here, the spikes on the edge of the harrow tear the cotton from the wounds, as the body is turned over again, hurl it into the ditch, and the harrow starts working again. Thus it writes more and more deeply during the whole twelve hours. The first six hours the condemned man lives about as before, he only suffers pain. After two hours the piece of felt is removed, for the man hasn't the strength to scream any more. Here, at the head end, we put warm rice porridge into this electrically heated tray, from which the man, if he cares to, can eat whatever he can lap up with his tongue. None of them ever misses this opportunity. I know really of none, and my experience is great. Only around the sixth hour does he lose his pleasure in eating. Then I usually kneel down here and observe the following phenomenon. Rarely does the man swallow the last morsel. All he does is to turn it about in his mouth and spit it out into the ditch. I have to stoop over then, otherwise I would catch it in the face. But around the sixth hour how quiet the man becomes! Even the dullest begins to understand. It starts around the eyes. From here it spreads out. It's a sight which could tempt you to lie down under the harrow with him. But nothing further happens, the man is just beginning to decipher the writing, and he purses his lips as if listening. You have seen that it is not easy to decipher the writing with the eye; but our man deciphers it with his wounds. Of course, that means a lot of work; he needs six hours to accomplish it. Then the harrow spears him clean through and hurls him

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London Letter

18 Dorset Chambers
Chagford Street
Ivor Place
London NW 1
England
Jan. 3, 1941

Dear Editors:

As I am writing this letter in answer to a privately-addressed one of your own, perhaps I had better start by quoting what you said, so as to make clear what questions I am trying to answer:

"There are things the news reports do not tell us. For instance, what's happening under the surface in the way of politics? Among the labor groups? What is the general mood, if there is such a thing, among writers, artists and intellectuals? What transmutations have their lives and their preoccupations suffered?"

Well, as to the political situation, I think it is true to say that at the moment we are in the middle of a backwash which is not going to make very much ultimate difference. The reactionaries, which means roughly the people who read the *Times*, had a bad scare in the summer, but they saved themselves by the skin of their teeth, and they are now consolidating their position against the new crisis which is likely to arise in the spring. In the summer what amounted to a revolutionary situation existed in England, though there was no one to take advantage of it. After twenty years of being fed on sugar and water the nation had suddenly realised what its rulers were like, and there was a widespread readiness for sweeping economic and social changes, combined with absolute determination to prevent invasion. At that moment, I believe, the opportunity existed to isolate the monied class and swing the mass of the nation behind a policy in which resistance to Hitler and destruction of class-privilege were combined. Clement Greenberg's remark in his article in *Horizon*, that the working class is the only class in England that seriously means to defeat Hitler, seems to me quite untrue. The bulk of the middle class are just as anti-Hitler as the working class, and their morale is probably more reliable. The fact which Socialists, especially when they are looking at the English scene from the outside, seldom seem to me to grasp, is that the patriotism of the middle classes is a thing to be made use of. The people who stand to attention during "God Save the King" would readily transfer their loyalty to a Socialist regime, if they were handled with the minimum of tact. However, in the summer months no one saw the opportunity, the Labour leaders (with the possible exception of Bevin) allowed themselves to be made the tame cats of the Government, and when the invasion failed to come off and the air raids were less terrible than everyone had expected, the quasi-revolutionary mood ebbed away. At present the Right are coun-

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ter-attacking. Margesson's entry into the Cabinet—the nearest equivalent possible to bringing Chamberlain out of his grave—was a swift cash-in on Wavell's victory in Egypt. The campaign in the Mediterranean is not finished, but events there have justified the Conservatives as against the Left and they can be expected to take advantage of it. It is not impossible that one or two leftish newspapers will be suppressed before long. Suppression of the *Daily Worker* is said to have been mooted already in the Cabinet. But this swing of the pendulum is not vitally important unless one believes, as I do not—and I doubt whether many people under fifty believe it either—that England can win the war without passing through revolution and go straight back to pre-1939 "normality," with 3 million unemployed, etc., etc.

But at present there does not effectively exist any policy between being patriotic in the "King and Country" style and being pro-Hitler. If another wave of anti-capitalist feeling arrived it could at the moment only be canalised into defeatism. At the same time there is little sign of this in England, though the morale is probably worse in the industrial towns than elsewhere. In London, after four months of almost ceaseless bombing, morale is far better than a year ago when the war was stagnant. The only people who are overtly defeatist are Mosley's followers, the Communists and the pacifists. The Communists still possess a footing in the factories and may some time stage a come-back by fomenting grievances about working-hours, etc. But they have difficulty in getting their working-class followers to accept a definitely pro-Hitler policy, and they had to pipe down during the desperate days in the summer. With the general public their influence is nil, as one can see by the votes in the by-elections, and the powerful hold they had on the press in the years 1935-9 has been completely broken. Mosley's Blackshirts have ceased to exist as a legal organisation, but they probably deserve to be taken more seriously than the Communists, if only because the tone of their propaganda is more acceptable to soldiers, sailors and airmen. No leftwing organisation in England has ever been able to gain a footing in the armed forces. The Fascists have, of course, tried to put the blame for both the war and the discomfort caused by the air-raids onto the Jews, and during the worst of the East End bombings they did succeed in raising a mutter of anti-Semitism, though only a faint one. The most interesting development on the anti-war front has been the interpenetration of the pacifist movement by Fascist ideas, especially anti-Semitism. After Dick Sheppard's death British pacifism seems to have suffered a moral collapse; it has not produced any significant gesture nor even many martyrs, and only about 15 per cent of the membership of the Peace Pledge Union now appear to be active. But many of the surviving pacifists now spin a line of talk indistinguishable from that of the Blackshirts ("Stop this Jewish war" etc.), and the actual membership of the P.P.U. and the British Union overlap to some extent. Put all together, the various pro-Hitler organisations can hardly number 150,000 members, and they are not likely to achieve much by their own

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efforts, but they might play an important part at a time when a government of the Pétain type was contemplating surrender. There is some reason to think that Hitler does not want Mosley's organisation to grow too strong. Lord Haw-Haw, the most effective of the English-language German broadcasters, has been identified with fair certainty as Joyce, a member of the split-off Fascist party and a very bitter personal enemy of Mosley.

You ask also about the intellectual life of England, the various currents of thought in the literary world, etc. I think the dominating factors are these:

(a) The complete destruction, owing to the Russo-German pact, of the leftwing "anti-fascist" orthodoxy of the past five years.

(b) The fact that physically fit people under 35 are mostly in the army, or expect soon to be so.

(c) The increase in book-consumption owing to the boredom of war, together with the unwillingness of publishers to risk money on unknown writers.

(d) The bombing (of which more presently—but I should say here that it is less terrifying and more of a nuisance than you perhaps imagine).

The Russo-German pact not only brought the Stalinists and near-Stalinists into the pro-Hitler position, but it also put an end to the game of "I told you so" which the leftwing writers had been so profitably playing for five years past. "Anti-fascism" as interpreted by the *News-Chronicle*, the *New Statesman* and the Left Book Club had depended on the belief—I think it was also half-consciously a hope—that no British government would ever stand up to Hitler. When the Chamberlain government finally went to war it took the wind out of the leftwingers' sails by putting into effect the policy which they themselves had been demanding. In the few days before war was declared it was extremely amusing to watch the behaviour of orthodox Popular Front-ers, who were exclaiming dolefully "It's going to be another Munich," although in fact it had been obvious for months past that war was inevitable. These people were in reality *hoping* for another Munich, which would allow them to continue with their Cassandra role without having to face the facts of modern war. I was recently in very severe trouble for saying in print that those who were most "anti-Fascist" during the period 1935-9 were most defeatist now. Nevertheless I believe that this is broadly true, and not only of the Stalinists. It is a fact that as soon as war began all the fire went out of orthodox "anti-Fascism." All the stuff about Fascist atrocities, denunciations of Chamberlain, etc., which it had been completely impossible to get away from in any highbrow magazine in peace-time, suddenly came to an end, and far more fuss has been made among the leftwing intelligentsia about the internment of German refugees than about anything done by the enemy. During the Spanish civil war the leftwing intellectuals felt that this was "their" war and that they were influencing events in it to some extent. In so far as they expected the war against Germany to happen they imagined that it would be a sort of enlarged version of the war in Spain, a leftwing

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war in which poets and novelists could be important figures. Of course, it is nothing of the kind. It is an all-in modern war fought mainly by technical experts (airmen etc.) and conducted by people who are patriotic according to their lights but entirely reactionary in outlook. At present there is no function in it for intellectuals. From the start the Government have more or less frankly gone on the principle of "keeping the Reds out of it," and it was not till after the disaster in France that they began to allow men known to have fought in Spain to join the army. Consequently the chief activity among leftwing writers is a rather pettifogging criticism which turns into a kind of dismay when England wins a victory, because this always falsifies their predictions. In the summer the leftwing intelligentsia were completely defeatist, far more so than they allowed to appear in print. At the moment when England seemed likely to be invaded one well-known leftwing writer actually wanted to discourage the idea of mass resistance, on the ground that the Germans would behave more leniently if not opposed. There was also a move on foot, with an eye to the coming Nazi occupation, to get the Scotland Yard Special Branch to destroy the political dossiers which, no doubt, most of us possess. All this was in marked contrast to the attitude of the common people, who either had not woken up to the fact that England was in danger, or were determined to resist to the last ditch. But certain leftwing writers and lecturers who had fought in Spain, notably Tom Wintringham, did a lot to stem the tide of defeatism.

Personally I consider it all to the good that the confident war-mongering mood of the Popular Front period, with its lying propaganda and its horrible atmosphere of orthodoxy, has been destroyed. But it has left a sort of hole. Nobody knows what to think, nothing is being started. It is very difficult to imagine any new "school" of literature arising at a moment when the youngish writers have had their universe punctured and the very young are either in the army or kept out of print by lack of paper. Moreover the economic foundations of literature are shifting, for the highbrow literary magazine, depending ultimately on leisured people who have been brought up in a minority culture, is becoming less and less possible. *Horizon* is a sort of modern democratised version of this (compare its general tone with that of the *Criterion* of ten years ago), and even *Horizon* keeps going only with difficulty. On the other hand the reading public is increasing and the intellectual level of the popular press has taken a tremendous bound upwards since the outbreak of war. But hardly any good *books* are appearing. Novels are still being published in great numbers, but they are of a trashiness that passes belief. Only the mentally dead are capable of sitting down and writing novels while this nightmare is going on. The conditions that made it possible for Joyce and Lawrence to do their best work during the war of 1914-18 (i.e., the consciousness that presently the world would be sane again) no longer exist. There is such a doubt about the continuity of civilization as can hardly have existed for hundreds of years, and meanwhile there are the air-raids, which make con-

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tinuous intellectual life very difficult. I don't mean because of physical danger. It is true that by this time everyone in London has had at least one "providential escape"—these so common that it is now considered bad form to talk about them—but the actual casualties are very few and even the damage, though enormous, is mostly localised to the City of London and the East End slums. But the disorganisation of transport, communications, etc., causes endless inconvenience. One seems to spend half one's time trying to buy a sack of coal because the electricity has failed, or trying to put through telephone calls on a wire that has gone dead, or wandering about looking for a bus—and this is a miserably cold, slushy winter. The night life of London has almost ceased, not because of the bombs but because of the shrapnel, which is often plentiful enough to make it dangerous to go out after dusk. The movies close early and theatres have stopped altogether, except for a few matinees. Only the pubs are much as usual, in spite of the now enormous price of beer. On nights when the raids are bad the deafening racket of the guns makes it difficult to work. It is a time in which it is hard to settle down to anything and even the writing of a silly newspaper article takes twice as long as usual.

I wonder whether, even in what I have said, I exaggerate the seriousness of the air raids? It is worth remembering that at the worst period of the blitz it was calculated that only 15 per cent of London's population were sleeping in shelters. The number is added to by those whose homes are destroyed by bombs, but also constantly decreased by those who grow gradually callous. When all is said and done one's main impression is the immense stolidity of ordinary people, the widespread vague consciousness that things can never be the same again, and yet, together with that, the tendency of life to slip back into the familiar pattern. On the day in September when the Germans broke through and set the docks on fire, I think few people can have watched those enormous fires without feeling that this was the end of an epoch. One seemed to feel that the immense changes through which our society has got to pass were going to happen there and then. But to an astonishing extent things have slipped back to normal. I will end with a few extracts from my diary, to try and give you some idea of the atmosphere:

"The aeroplanes come back and back, every few minutes. It is just like in an eastern country, when you keep thinking you have killed the last mosquito inside your net, and every time, as soon as you have turned the light out, another starts droning. . . . The commotion made by the mere passage of a bomb through the air is astonishing. The whole house shakes, enough to rattle objects on the table. Why it is that the electric lights dip when a bomb passes close by, nobody seems to know. . . . Oxford Street yesterday, from Oxford Circus up to the Marble Arch, completely empty of traffic, and only a few pedestrians, with the late afternoon sun shining straight down the empty roadway and glittering on innumerable fragments of broken glass. Outside John Lewis's, a pile of plaster dress models, very pink and realistic, looking so like a pile of corpses that one

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could have mistaken them for that at a little distance. Just the same sight in Barcelona, only there it was plaster saints from desecrated churches. . . . Regular features of the time: neatly swept-up piles of glass, litter of stone and splinters of flint, smell of escaping gas, knots of sightseers waiting at the cordons where there are unexploded bombs. . . . Nondescript people wandering about, having been evacuated from their houses because of delayed-action bombs. Yesterday two girls stopping me in the street, very elegant in appearance except that their faces were filthily dirty: 'Please, sir, can you tell us where we are?' . . . Withal, huge areas of London almost normal, and everyone quite happy in the daytime, never seeming to think about the coming night, like animals which are unable to foresee the future so long as they have a bit of food and a place in the sun."

Cyril Connolly and Stephen Spender send all the best. Good luck to America.

Yours sincerely

GEORGE ORWELL

Instead of A Carol

The winter hardens. Every night, I hear
The patient, khaki beast grieve in his stall,
His eyes behind the hard fingers soft as wool.
His cheerful morning face puts me in mind
Of certain things were rumoured far and near
To hearts wherein there fretted and repined
A world that came to its last dated year.

Rayner Heppenstall

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Bertolt Brecht's Poetry

Clement Greenberg

THERE IS A KIND of modern poetry that gets its character from a flavoring of folk or popular culture. You will find it in the work of such poets as Apollinaire, Lorca, Mayakovsky and Cummings. Rimbaud and Laforgue are its original ancestors, as of so much else in modern poetry. It is anti-literary and anti-rhetorical. It takes over the attitudes and manners of folk and popular poetry for their tang, sincerity, irreverence and lack of pretention, as against the formality and overstatement of "book" literature, as against the endowed, the established, the respectable, in other words, as against Literature itself. This modernist poetry is racy and exuberant in backward countries like Spain and Russia, where folk culture still survives side by side with the formal culture of the city. In France, England and in this country it becomes wistful and impudent, and keeps to a minor key. It always has humor and sometimes, as in the case of Lorca, a justifiable quaintness, both of which are created by the transposition of the naive and low-brow into sophisticated and highly self-conscious modes.

As much as Germany participated in "modern" movements, it never produced a poetry of this sort. Whereas in this country, France and England on the one hand, and in Spain and Russia on the other, popular and folk culture are far enough away from high-brow international culture to have spice and contrast, in Germany folk poetry has so become part of the main literary stream through the work of Herder and the Romantics that it cannot be opposed to it. At the same time German popular literature, including kitsch, is also intimately associated with folk culture. For this reason until rather lately there was no sharp line to be drawn between high brow and low brow in German poetry. Popular songs in Germany are not art, but neither are they half so shoddy as their French and American equivalents. (Compare the verse of such frankly popular German songs as *Zwei Herzen in Dreivierteltakt*

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and *Jeden Sonntagabend das Dorfmusik Spielt* with anything on the same order in English or French.) They still show the saving evidences of a recent folk ancestry.

The late development of German culture, which accounts for this, also accounts for the peculiar nature of German avant-garde movements, which were never so detached from and irresponsible towards official culture as in France and elsewhere. The fact is, that the Germans do not have enough classic literature, have not produced enough in the past to enable them to dispense with ambitious contemporary work. There is not, actually, enough to read, enough to counterpose to the present. (This is why the Germans translate so much.) So that no sooner did German avant-garde movements appear than they were re-absorbed by official tradition and by society as a whole, no matter how intransigent they may have tried to be. Rilke's poems could sell 60,000 copies, and before Hitler, Germany was the best market for advanced painting. Stefan George and his circle, with all their contempt for the bourgeois herd, found themselves raised very early to the status of official prophets of the beautiful; and their fate was that of almost every avant-garde cénacle in Germany during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

When Bertolt Brecht found himself pulled in the direction of Rimbaud—the Rimbaud of *Season in Hell*—he had to start from scratch to devise a means of reflecting this influence. He could not learn from Apollinaire, nor from Expressionism or anything else in German. So he proceeded to do something quite original by developing a poetry of *serious* parody, compelled and helped by the peculiar nature of German literary tradition. Popular and folk poetry are but one ingredient of the advanced, experimental, international styles of Apollinaire, Lorca, Mayakovsky and the others. In Brecht's verse the forms, attitudes and associations of popular—and sometimes classic—poetry are the foundation. It is not difficult or obscure poetry. It is not private, or at least never obviously so. In Brecht's first phase the verse technique itself is more or less conventional, experiment being confined to an occasional variation of beat or a daring enjambment. It is hardly the kind of poetry we expect from one who as a playwright was under the influence of Expressionism, and whose fellow poets of the same generation were more or less dominated by it. What is new is not what we

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customarily associate with the new in modern poetry, but consists in the way in which Brecht exploits the past and popular accomplishments of German poetry for his own subversive and anti-literary irony.

Parody ordinarily finds its end in what it parodies, but in Brecht's hands it became the means to something beyond itself, more profound and more important. The special quality of Brecht's poetry—particularly until 1927 when his *Hauspostille* collection was published, shortly after which he first became a Communist sympathizer—arose from a disparity. He took a form like the German ballad, which is inextricably associated with the countryside and a semi-feudal way of life, and charged it with a new *city* content and feeling too powerful and morbid for the ballad convention to bear. This incongruity is the strength of the poetry, is a good part of it. Now, were one to do this in English the result would be comic and very little else, for there would be too great a disparity to produce anything but humor. The English ballad is literary archaeology, and it is as archaeology that it appears in Coleridge, Keats, Rossetti and Morris, who escape the ridiculous only because—wisely and romantically—they fit it with an appropriate historical content. But the German ballad was in a sense still alive as late as Heine and Mörike; its originals had not yet completely disappeared from the German countryside. And today it is still almost a serious form, too recently dead to be quaint, still taken seriously by several contemporary German poets whose verse is much less stale than John Masefield's. What is true of the ballad is more or less true of most of the other forms parodied by Brecht. The popular and traditional modes which Brecht uses are still strong enough to resist what Brecht wants to make them say in more ways than by producing humor. They still live respectably outside textbooks, and their associations are part of the life of almost every German. Brecht acclimatizes them, and Goethe and Luther as well, to shady neighborhoods. Thus the two poles of Brecht's early poetry are not so much the naive or quaint as opposed to the sophisticated, as the dangerous and irreverent as opposed to the safe and the respectable, the slums and the gutter as opposed to the countryside and suburbs. The incongruities must in some measure proclaim themselves by humor, but it is not the humor of the ridiculous, but rather that of irony.

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The stanza, meter and some turns of phrase, even the motif, of Brecht's *Legende vom Toten Soldat,* or Legend of the Dead Soldier, might be those of an 18th century folk song still sung today in Germany by school-children. Many German ballads are about soldiers and death, and Brecht's theme is really congruent to his form. But his content and feeling are utterly opposed to the content and feeling with which this form and this theme have generally been associated. A great deal of the poem's force springs from this contradiction:

Und als der Krieg im fünften Lenz
Keinen Ausblick auf Frieden bot
Da zog der Soldat seine Konsequenz
Und starb den Heldentod.

Der Krieg war aber noch nicht gar
Drum tat es dem Kaiser leid
Dass sein Soldat gestorben war:
Es schien ihm noch vor der Zeit. . . .

Und sie nahmen sogleich den Soldaten mit
Die Nacht war blau und schön.
Man konnte, wenn man keinen Helm aufhatte
Die Sterne der Heimat sehn.

Sie schütteten ihm einen feurigen Schnaps
In den verwesten Leib
Und hängten zwei Schwestern in seinen Arm
Und sein halb entblösstes Weib.

Und weil der Soldat nach Verwesung stinkt
Drum hinkt ein Pfaffe voran
Der über ihn ein Weihrauchfass schwingt
Dass er nicht stinken kann.

Voran die Musik mit Tschindrara
Spielt einen flotten Marsch.
Und der Soldat, so wie er's gelernt
Schmeisst seine Beine vom Arsch. . . .

(And as the war in its fifth spring gave no prospect of peace, the soldier came to the logical conclusion and died a hero's death.

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The war was not quite over yet, it caused the kaiser pain to have his soldier die: it seemed ahead of time. . . .
And they immediately took the soldier along, the night was blue and fine. You could see, if you wore no helmet, the stars at home.
They poured a fiery schnaps into the rotten body and hung two nurses on his arm and his half-naked wife.
And because the soldier stinks of decay, a parson limps to the fore who swings a censor over him so that he can stink no more.
In front the music with ching da-da-da plays a merry march. And the soldier, as he's been trained to do, flings his legs from his arse. . . .)

The seeming crudeness of the meter, the dry, banal idiom and the economy of details are the setting against which the ballad projects its horror, intensified by the contrast. This is really parody in reverse, for what Brecht does is to raise the ballad form to a dignity it has not enjoyed for a long time, even in Germany. Nevertheless, it is parody. The humor, savage as it is, results largely from the contrast between the situation and the accumulated habitual responses provided by tradition—it is not simply that Brecht uses a certain formal pattern: he uses everything historically connected with that pattern—and what that situation and those responses develop into. The ballad style of understatement is over-extended and, in a way, criticized, by being forced to understate grotesque and ludicrous horror. . . .

Brecht is a consummate parodist because he is above all a playwright and dramatic poet, and by instinct puts on a mask before speaking. He is a satiric poet, but down at bottom not a lyricist. He has to cast himself in a role before the poetry can come. All the poems, save for a few, in the *Hauspostille,* or Homilies for the Home, are parodies in some way or other. Everything is grist for Brecht's mill: the Lutheran hymn, Bible versicles, the waltz song, nursery rhymes, magic spells, the prayer, even jazz songs—which last he succeeds in converting to his purpose only because colloquial German hasn't the banality of its English counterpart and is much less remote from literary language—and at that, even the jazz song tends to become a ballad when Brecht uses it, especially in the handling of the refrain. Because most of these forms are closely connected with music and because Brecht himself is very much interested in music, he was able to collaborate with composers—something rare in modern poetry—and quite a few of his ballads have been set to music, in addition to the librettos he wrote for Kurt Weill and Hanns Eisler.

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By parodying forms that are in circulation outside the customary channels of "book" literature, Brecht gained for his poetry a certain sharp contemporaneous quality such as we can hardly find elsewhere in modern verse. It seems to me that Auden learned much from him and found his example an aid in his endeavors to free modern English poetry from the straitjacket of pure poetry and to make it deal once more with wide ranges of experience. If poets can no longer deal with politics, religion and love on their own terms, and earnestly, because to take too positive a stand would involve them in unpoetic controversy, then they must deal with them ironically. The attribution of influences is dangerous, but I cannot help thinking that Auden learned something from Brecht in the way of working into poetry slang, the modish phrase, echoes of the rhetoric of the past, the scraps of intelligent conversation, the clichés of the intellect and of journalism, and the flat up-to-date wisdom of psychology and Marxist politics. Auden, too, parodies prayers, odes, magic spells and nursery rhymes. His precocious wit is his own, and it is something subtler and more cultured than Brecht's, but he must have got more than a hint from him as to how to metabolize it into poetry. . . .

As much as Brecht is a parodist and strives for an anonymous manner, there is a unified style in the *Hauspostille* poems which constantly breaks through with its personal resonance. His most consistent manner is one of dry understatement, simple, yet indirect, affectedly restrained. But what makes his style most characteristically his own are the shifts in tone and transpositions of key. To put established and well-worn conventions to new uses is to strike discords. Dry matter-of-factness unfurls into Biblical grandiloquence. The sententious passage collapses abruptly at a banal expression or trivial image, or when the rhyme falls on an auxiliary verb or the main stress on the illogical word. The grim and horrible alternate with the idyllic, the brutal with the sentimental, the cynical with the falsely naive. There is a process of inflation and deflation, a succession of anti-climaxes:

> *Ich, Bertolt Brecht, bin aus den schwarzen Wäldern.*
> *Meine Mutter trug mich in die Städte hinein*
> *Als ich in ihrem Leibe lag. Und die Kälte der Wälder*
> *Wird in mir bis zu meinem Absterben sein.*

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In der Asphaltstadt bin ich daheim. Von allem Anfang
Versehen mit jedem Sterbsakrament:
Mit Zeitungen. Und Tabak. Und Branntwein.
Misstrauisch und faul und zufrieden am End.

Ich bin zu den Leuten freundlich. Ich setze
Einen steifen Hut auf nach ihrem Brauch.
Ich sage: es sind ganz besonders riechende Tiere
Und ich sage: es macht nichts, ich bin es auch. . . .

Gegen Morgen in der grauen Frühe pissen die Tannen
Und ihr Ungeziefer, die Vögel, fängt an zu schrein.
Um die Stunde trink ich mein Glas in der Stadt aus und schmeisse
Den Tabakstummel weg und schlafe beunruhigt ein.

Wird sind gesessen ein leichtes Geschlechte
In Häusern, die fur unzerstörbare galten
(So haben wir gebaut die langen Gehäuse des Eilands Manhattan
Und die dünnen Antennen, die das Atlantische Meer unterhalten.)

Von diesen Städten wird bleiben: der durch sie hindurchging, der Wind!
Fröhlich machet das Haus den Esser: er leert es.
Wir wissen, dass wir Vorläufige sind
Und nach uns wird kommen: nichts Nennenswertes.

Bei den Erdbeben, die kommen werden, werde ich hoffentlich
Meine Virginia nicht ausgehen lassen durch Bitterkeit
Ich, Bertolt Brecht, in die Asphaltstädte verschlagen
Aus den schwarzen Wäldern in meiner Mutter in früher Zeit.

(I, Bertolt Brecht, am from the black forests. My mother carried me into the cities while I lay in her body. And the coldness of the forests will remain in me until my death.
I am at home in the asphalt city. From the very beginning provided with every mortal sacrament: with newspapers. And tobacco. And brandy. Distrustful and lazy and satisfied in the end. I am friendly to people. I wear a stiff hat according to their custom. I say: they are beasts that smell quite peculiarly. And I say: It doesn't matter. I'm one too. . . .

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Towards morning in the gray dawn the evergreens piss, and their vermin, the birds, begin to cry. Around that hour I drain my glass in the city and fling my cigar butt away and go to sleep, troubled.

We have sat, a trivial generation, in houses that were held to be indestructable (thus did we build the tall structures of the Island of Manhattan and the thin antennae which entertain the Atlantic Ocean).

Of these cities will remain: that which goes through them, the wind! The house makes the eater happy: he empties it. We know that we are transient and that there will come after us: nothing worth mentioning.

In the earthquakes which will come I shall not, I hope, allow my cigar to go out because of bitterness, I, Bertolt Brecht, strayed into the asphalt cities from the black forests, in my mother long ago.)

This is from the poem *Vom Armen B. B.*, or About Poor B. B., in which Brecht pretends to speak for himself. The mannerisms of a variety of literary and non-literary attiudes, past and present, are juxtaposed with the flair, humor and seriousness which are Brecht's genius. He dramatizes himself only in order to puncture every false attitude within reach, to exhibit the disparity between literature and the facts.

Brecht misfires occasionally, usually because of a lapse in taste. Sometimes the irony is over-labored, and the grotesque and macabre overdone. Sometimes the understatement is overstated. But at that, it is remarkable how rare Brecht's failures are: there is hardly a really bad poem in the *Hauspostille* collection.

Brecht wanted to write "popular" because, like Rimbaud, his position was that of the pariah who has no patience with the formalities, either of living or of literature. In the *Hauspostille* and in the plays of the same period he does not storm against society; the lumpenproletariat, the gutter men, complain and lament, but they do not criticize. Brecht simply rejected civilization entire and went in for a nihilism of despair which permitted him only one value: comradeship, which he found at its purest where it had the least competition: the Bohemia of tramps, suspicious characters, freebooters and sailors. "Through thick and thin" and "true to the end" were bromides that Brecht took seriously. (One given to that sort of thing might find the Brecht of this period a perfect example of proto-Nazi temperament, with *Führerprinzip*, violence, freebootery, pimps and all.) He celebrates the example of women who out of faithfulness follow their men into degradation, who hang on to their partners through corruption and stench, humiliation and despair. In search of the places where the horror of civiliza-

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tion is most naked, he seeks out its horizontal as well as vertical frontiers. The traditional German wanderlust had become morbid. Brecht had grown up in a post-war Germany whose younger intellectuals were fascinated by low life, crime and perversity, and *aficionados* about the movie America of gangsters and the Wild West. There was a push downwards and outwards, away from the street levels of the asphalt wilderness. Wearing a Kipling costume, Brecht made overseas expeditions in verse to tropical hells, Mexico, the Wild West, nameless deserts, uncharted oceans. But it was Kipling in despair, a Kipling who had read Rimbaud, had nobody waiting for him at home, and was bored and sick to death.

Brecht was the poet-laureate of the Germany which had been dislocated by the Inflation, and which found in him a talent and a temperament to express its mood. He scandalized it and he fitted it. It was when all Germany had a consciousness of itself as a pariah among the nations; Brecht universalized and sublimated this consciousness by identifying it with all mankind. He was having plays produced, some of them with success; he had several notable theatre scandals to his credit; he was a very young man with a bright future, not half so isolated from society as he might have been; a good part of his audience agreed with what he said, as shocked as it was, and he did not need to be obscure in his poetry. It was this community of mood that gave his verse its carrying power, circulated it in alert society, and deprived his nihilism of pose and idiosyncracy. The devaluation of money justified the devaluation of every other value. Mankind was exiled from its possessions, tangible and intangible, and every individual was an alien. In spite of his pessimism, it would be wrong to consider Brecht as a case of the *lonely* poet.

However, there is a side of Brecht which cannot be explained by post-war Germany, but is the result of his Lutheran upbringing and is part of the particular personality which he cannot help being. His attitudes have always had a religious color; and underneath his nihilism as well as his communism there lurks a religious moralist. Brecht's habitual bad temper and sour disposition are not solely the result of dissatisfied egotism; they also belong to one who finds nothing but horror and loathing for the acts of his time, and little or insufficient satisfaction in the constant, sensual pleasures. It is not merely to be sacrilegious or to take advantage

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of a convenient form that he parodies liturgical style so much. He means to have his tongue in his cheek when he says sin, but his tongue comes out; for Brecht, without believing in religious virtues or being a mystic, is conscious of sin the way a believer is. It fills him with an unaccountable horror and fascinates him, as it fascinated Baudelaire, because for himself it really has the quality of sin. He is never less a parodist than when he parodies Luther or the Old Testament, whether to curse life in general or only Hitler. It is the style of his temperament.

Until 1927 at least, Brecht rejected everything, Lenin as well as the Kaiser. He wrote a poem about the Red Army:

. . . In diesen Jahren fiel das Wort Freiheit
Aus Mündern, drinnen Eis zerbrach.
Und viele sah man mit Tigergebissen
Ziehend der roten, unmenschlichen Fahne nach. . . .

Und mit dem Leib, von Regen hart
Und mit dem Herz versehrt von Eis
Und mit den blutbefleckten leeren Händen
So kommen wir grinsend in euer Paradeis.

(In those years the word freedom fell from mouths in which ice cracked. And many were seen with tiger jaws, following the red, inhuman flag. . . . And with our bodies hardened by rain, and with our hearts seared by ice, and with our blood-stained empty hands, we come grinning into your paradise.)

Since Schiller and the *Sturm und Drang* there has been a tradition in Germany of the young poet as reckless rebel—who finally takes a responsible position towards society. Brecht has in his way followed this trite pattern. Becoming a Communist some time around 1927, he went through what might be called a change of personality. He was converted. He abandoned his passive irresponsibility for an attitude so utterly earnest that it is almost suspect. Turning didactic poet in the most literal sense, he saw beyond the ends of poetry as poetry the obligation to teach the ignorant and poor how to change the world.

It was as a result of his previous poetry rather than because he had set out to write with such an intention, that Brecht began to believe that it was possible to produce contemporary poetry and

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drama of a high order which would still be palatable to the masses. He devised a theory of a new anti-Aristotelean form of drama which he called the "epic" drama. Instead of involving the spectator emotionally, it would sober and cool him into an objectivity which would enable him to consider the dramatic action, not as one who identifies himself with the roles enacted on the stage, but from the point of view of his own practical, every-day interests as a member of society. The "epic" drama would teach above all. This theory is enunciated with such meticulous dogmatism that there hovers over it an air of that straight-faced clowning we are always forced to suspect in Brecht. It is as if he were parodying Aristotle and Marx at the same time. The then current Stalinist line on proletarian literature—very much an unknown quantity and the object of a haphazard search—gave free play to Brecht's theories, while both his originality and his dogmatism were encouraged by the exaggerated aggressiveness at that time of the Third International's political line. As he quoted the right authorities and repeated the correct shibboleths, he received more or less official support from the German Communist Party.

Brecht's first stage as a poet culminates in the magnificent libretto of the *Dreigroschenoper*, which was still written in what I choose to call his *Hauspostille* manner, and still somewhat "Aristotelean," although Brecht had already made his turn to Communism. After this his style underwent a radical change. In the choruses and recitatives interspersed through the "epic" *Lehrstücken*, or "didactic pieces," he began to use an unrhymed free verse designed to accord better with the rhythms of contemporary speech and to cut away those non-essential embellishments of poetry which might dissimulate the austerity of the Bolshevik method. In the directions accompanying the printed texts of the didactic pieces Brecht emphasized the necessity of a "dry" delivery. Poetry was to become stripped, bare, prosaic. It was to be settled with large colonies of prose. (I do not want to exaggerate Auden's debt to Brecht, but again it seems to me that he got hints here as to how to assimilate prose phrasing to poetry.) Rhythm was no longer to be metric or musical, but forensic, persuasive and rhetorical. A fair specimen of Brecht's new style is the *Lob der Partei*, or Praise of the Party, from the play *Die Massnahme:*

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Der Einzelne hat zwei Augen
Die Partei hat tausend Augen.
Die Partei sieht sieben Staaten
Der Einzelne sieht eine Stadt.
Der Einzelne hat seine Stunde
Aber die Partei hat viele Stunden.
Der Einzelne kann vernichtet werden
Aber die Partei kann nicht vernichtet werden
Denn sie ist der Vortrupp der Massen
Und führt ihren Kampf
Mit den Methoden der Klassiker, welche geschöpft sind
Aus der Kenntnis der Wirklichkeit.

(The Individual has two eyes The Party has a thousand eyes. The Party sees seven states The Individual sees one city. The Individual has his hour But the Party has many hours. The Individual can be destroyed But the Party cannot be destroyed. For it is the vanguard of the masses And conducts its struggle with the methods of the classical teachers, which are derived From the knowledge of actuality.)

Brecht had become so inveterate a parodist that he could not prevent himself from parodying even the Bible in his political poetry—although there may be the influence of Stalin's painfully simplified, catechism style of oratory. However, more than parody is involved. The same protestantism that Brecht showed when he was a cynic manifested itself in his adherence to Marxism. Lenin's precepts became for him an eternal standard of conduct, and Bolshevism a way of life and a habit of virtue rather than a historically determined line of action intended to realize a definite goal. The didactic pieces, the little playlets, the dialogues, aphorisms, even the Lindbergh radio choral, contained in the *Lehrbücher* or Textbooks form a morality literature, hornbooks of Bolshevik piety, Imitations of Lenin. And for all his sobriety, for all the strenuous simplicity and earnestness and angularity of his manner, Brecht remained all poet—in the old-fashioned sense which he tried to repudiate—and when he put Lenin's precepts into poetry he transformed them into parables and their settings into mythology. Whether or not this made Brecht a successful revolutionary poet cannot be discussed here, but it was certainly in harmony with the particular style of devotion which Stalinism instils in its faithful.

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The mutations of Stalin's line have had a considerable effect upon Brecht's writing. Especially since Hitler and exile placed him more than ever at the mercy of the Communist Party apparatus for an audience and honorariums. He went along into the Popular Front, submitted to "socialist realism" with the required docility, and put his theories of the "epic" drama on a shelf for future reference, as he himself says more or less in an extenuating note to the "anti-fascist" play *Senora Carrera's Rifles*. The tautness of the "epic" manner slackens into more conventional prose, and he began to write poems in something of the old *Hauspostille* vein. He arrives at a synthesis: loosely cadenced verse, rhymed and unrhymed, heavier, more uneven, less understated and dry than before. The relaxed rhythms seem to express a slackening political certainty. Brecht begins to lament again and to inveigh. He no longer teaches, he is no longer so positive. But his old skill is still there: he remains as quick and as sure in his sensitivity to language as an animal in its instincts. He can still write a poem like the *Verschollener Ruhm der Riesenstadt New-York* or "Faded Renown of the Metropolis New York":

. . . Ach, diese Stimmen ihrer Frauen aus den Schalldosen!
So sang man (bewahrt diese Platten auf!) im goldnen Zeitalter!
Wohllaut der abendlichen Wasser von Miami!
Unaufhaltsame Heiterkeit der über nie endende Strassen schnell fahrenden Geschlechter!
Machtvolle Trauer singender Weiber in Zuversicht
Breitbrustige Männer beweinend, aber immer noch umgeben von
Breitbrüstigen Männern!

(Oh the voices of its women from the phonograph cabinets! Thus did they sing (preserve these records!) in the golden age! Melody at evening of the waters of Miami! Unceasing cheerfulness of the generations that speed along never-ending streets! Mighty sorrow of singing women weeping trustfully over broad-chested men, yet ever surrounded by broad-chested men!)

Here Brecht is an outspoken parodist once more. It would be difficult to specify just which of several elegiac manners he is parodying, yet we are definitely aware that he is parodying something.

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Because what is being parodied is so obscured, the poetry becomes, as always, very much Brecht's own.

It is unnecessary, no doubt, to point out that Brecht is much better known as a playwright than as a poet pure and simple. He began his career in the early nineteen-twenties as a writer of Expressionist plays in prose, whose savage power and originality soon set him apart. Poetry seems to have been a side issue at first. Yet it was largely due, I believe, to the fact that Brecht was a poet and wrote verse with conscience that he was able to develop boldly and to become the writer of *Dreigroschenoper* and *Die Heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe,* and so the unique force which he is. To say this is almost equivalent to saying that Shakespeare would never have been what he was had he not written verse, but we have become too much accustomed lately to accepting the drama as entirely independent of poetry. It is poetry that "sparks" Brecht's work, whether in verse or in prose. His instincts and habits as a poet enforce the incisiveness, shape and measure which characterize almost everything he does. What is remarkable is that this sense of form is part of Brecht's originality and not a constraint upon it, for it creates forms as strong—in Brecht's hands—as those it violates.

Brecht's gift is the gift of language, and this gift communicates what seems to me the most original literary temperament to have appeared anywhere in the last twenty years. It is Brecht's originality that I want to emphasize, not simply as a virtue in itself, but as a germinative influence, as something that can deflect the course of poets in English as well as in German from over-grazed and backward provinces to fresher and richer territories.

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The Poet On Capitol Hill (Part 2)

Morton Dauwen Zabel

III

Mr. MacLeish's poetry has had as curious a critical history as any serious verse of the past quarter-century. He has waged a long battle with his traducers (though in fact he has come off remarkably well at their hands), and following Pound's model (there is always a model behind Mr. MacLeish's practises) has carried on a cold feud with the critical profession. Yet the unstabie attitude of his readers has hardly been greater than the instability of his own style and motives. The abuses to which he has subjected his gifts and his incredibly shabby performances of recent months (particularly in *America Was Promises*) have pretty much removed him from serious consideration, but that his is a serious poetry can hardly be questioned. It is concerned with the major ordeal and spiritual motives of the post-War era; it has been modelled on the distinguished styles of the period. It is a poetry that succeeded in advancing from the flimsy imitative anonymity of youth (*Songs for a Summer's Day*, 1915; *Tower of Ivory*, 1917) into a sharp critical wit (*Streets of the Moon*, 1926) and an elegiac pathos (*New Found Land*, 1930) that corrected the Swinburnian distension and limp emotion of Mr. MacLeish's apprentice years and justified the tactful understudy he had given to Eliot and Pound. His poems never concealed their derivations: the style and motivation of *The Pot of Earth* (1925) came straight out of Frazer and *The Waste Land; The Hamlet* (1928) was a deft enlargement of the motives of "Prufrock," "Portrait of a Lady," and "The Hollow Men"; *Conquistador* (1932) took over the old-man theme of "Gerontion" and mixed it with the historical and anthropological images of Frenchmen like Apollinaire, Perse, Cendrars, Salmon, and Fargue; the general effects, contrasts, historical shifts, and colloquial structure of Pound's *Cantos* were freely diluted and made into easy reading not only in *Conquistador* but in the *Fres-*

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coes (1933), *Public Speech* (1936), and *America Was Promises* (1939).

It is no crime for a poet to have models; it can be a token of high esthetic conscience and a serious creative modesty; but Mr. MacLeish's discipleship went further than a respectful observance of the art and inspiration of his most gifted contemporaries. Mr. Humphries has traced the derivations in some detail. "I do not mean," he says,

> that Mr. MacLeish is influenced by this contemporary, or borrows to advantage from that one; I mean much more; I mean that he depends on this one or that one for his very existence. In prose he attempts to distract attention from this phenomenon by deploring the investigation that would discover his guilty secret. Still, these innocent tropisms are not so very dreadful; there is nothing shameful about striving to be like something which you long to be. Poetry derives from the art of mimicry; where Mr. MacLeish errs is in that his ecstasy commits him to the mimesis of poets, instead of the mimesis of things. We need not examine his early work if he does not want us to, for plenty of poets begin by imitating other ones, and writing verse whose early publication is a subsequent embarrassment. But whereas the normal course of poetic progress is from imitation to originality, in the case of Mr. MacLeish it has been from imitation to more extended feats of that art. He is getting better at it all the time. . . . The whole complex of Eliot's language, tone, rhythm, anthropological references, and symbolical allusiveness, has been elaborately imitated. . . ."[45]

This derivation persisted up to about 1932, when Mr. MacLeish's interests began to shift toward social and humanitarian issues. Since then Pound has perhaps been the dominating source of supplies. It would be too embarrassing for all concerned to push the tracing of echoes and devices into the verse of the past five years. *Public Speech* promised a fresh energy through the extraversion of the poet's interests from their prolonged self-commiseration; it gave signs of cross-fertilization from poets like Hopkins and Phelps Putnam; its colloquialism lost some of the ventriloquist reverberation and fake-slang exertion of *Conquistador* and the *Frescoes*. The excitement of public speech and causes hinted a salutary merging of the private poet with the social man and a new lease on life for Mr. MacLeish's exhausted elegiac and historical

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themes. Then, however, came a new kind of falsetto eloquence—the footless declamation employed in *Panic* (1935) and the radio-plays *The Fall of the City* (1937) and *Air Raid* (1938). When this culminated in *America Was Promises*, wherein Mr. MacLeish reduced his new patriotic function to a condition of verbal ineptitude and moral hogwash from which the most vicious parodist would have been charitable enough to spare him, the great public-speech hope collapsed beyond any present hope of revival.

Quite apart from the risk of pedantry and spiritual servility which a poet allows when he frankly imitates his betters, he faces another danger: he sets himself up against the test of his models' themes, experience, and integrity of motive. Imitators of Eliot are up against something more than a successful adaptation of an extremely personal poetic idiom and method; they match their quality and intelligence with Eliot's complex mastery of his ideas and experiences, his devious struggle with scruple and belief, his subtle dramatization of the problems of the modern mind and his personal courage in meeting their dangers. Imitators of Pound confront an infinitely more elusive challenge: a style and method are there to imitate (though no sensible poet can possibly believe that he is able to conceal derivations from so obviously patented a style) but the personal intelligence and processes of the poet are mercurial to the point of complete intangibility. The focus of critical intelligence is evident only by violent fits and starts; the central line of idea or belief is either confused beyond comprehension or disappears wholly from view. Moreover, these poets are sufficiently subtle in their imaginative and expressive skill to gain a concession from criticism. The imaginative authority of their style and experience is great enough to exempt them from direct personal attack. They have arrived at that translation of references and perceptions which transcends the momentary or emergent grasp of poetic certitude. They compel acceptance not as thinkers, believers, moral guides, or philosophers, but as poets.

Mr. MacLeish aspired to their moral and political functions when he took over their style, but he was never able to make the style the medium, translator, or master of these functions. Like Pound he aimed to express an imaginative unity in history (as Duhamel said of Rimbaud, "to foreshorten history by violence"). Like Eliot he wanted to dramatize the modern man's search for

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belief. These are the two major ambitions of the modern poet. But his shortcomings as a creative intelligence made it impossible for him to cope with history except in terms of heroic pathos and a kind of whimsical brooding which dissolves the energy of facts and distends the force of events beyond all reach of dramatic or imagistic concentration. And his extreme need of a personal faith and authority so far exceeded his sense of poetic confidence and certitude that the need showed up with the mawkish exaggeration which is the common rule among people outside of literature who are out hunting a faith and who can be humanly excused on grounds of psychic compulsion or moral extremity which are never sufficient in poetry itself.

Mr. Blackmur spoke of this fundamental hiatus in MacLeish's equipment when he reviewed the *Poems* in 1934:

> Mr. MacLeish is a serious poet in two quite different senses. . . . He is serious in his themes, and he is serious about himself personally. If I may make the comparison, Dante was serious about his poem, but was serious about himself only incidentally. For Mr. MacLeish the accent is the other way round, and it is because of his excessive seriousness about himself that his major poems are substantially defective. It lays him open to mistakes and confusion and inadequate writing; particularly it allows him to confuse what has been significant to himself with what is objectively significant in his poems. . . . He is apparently, for all his talent, unable to judge when his writing is adequate to the poem he has conceived and when it is adequate only to his private understanding. How Mr. MacLeish comes to such a confusion may, I think, be explained with comparative brevity. It is partly owing to the psychological and philosophical predicament of any sensitive man, not committed to an authoritative way of life, who yet pursues the theme of such a life. . . . In search of a personal salvation he finds something essentially not individual, not distinct, at all; he finds something, rather, of the lowest common denominator in which to immerse himself—in the pure rhetorical emotion of the *Hamlet* or in the oblivion of enthusiastic action of *Conquistador*. Thus he finds refuge rather than salvation by securing attitudes without reference to contemporary life.[46]

It is inevitable that a man caught between a need and a lack should be in a painful condition of tension and distraction, but such tension is fundamental to modern experience and out of it the greatest writers of our time have made their art, their vision of

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human tragedy or dignity, and their importance to their contemporaries. It was exactly this tension that spurred writers like Dos Passos, Hemingway, Barbusse, and Remarque to look into the shams and subterfuges of their age—its rabid nationalisms, its political violence, its fake gospels and calculated stupidities—in order to determine how much truth these represented, how far they were victimizing human lives and class rights through false promises of democratic salvation and abstract utopian ideals, and how far they were drugging the public intelligence into accepting political wars and the bait of sublime destinies as a substitute for realistic thinking and humane justice. The strain induced, true enough, a great deal of raw egotism and reckless disillusionment in the post-War generation; it led to some derangement and a great moral blight. But it also stimulated what is absolutely necessary to a period like ours; more necessary than ever at the present moment, when stupefying feats of mass-perversion and gospel-mongering in Europe seem to call for counterblasts of equal frenzy. It stimulated a profound critical alertness to public values and supra-personal standards, and an extreme suspicion of their professional advocates.

If the present moment in history is to be saved beyond the desperate necessities of its immediate peril, it will be saved exactly through the operation of such a critical faculty in men, classes, and nations. The moment is primed, however, for the opposite kind of salvation—through appeals to race, blood, and religious hatred, through contempt for intellect and thought as symptoms of the effete and decadent evils of the human species. Europe is smoking with the fires of this salvation. But to Mr. MacLeish the critical sense has always been suspect. He has railed against its use in literature; he has scoffed at "the pomposities of the critical canon";[47] he has said that "there is more hope for poetry in the ignorance of the newspaper notices than in most of the criticism which comes out of the high-brow reviews";[48] and now, in his defense of the mystic "Word," he implies that the critical skepticism of the young generation, who have fed on the perversions of truth supplied in the novels of their elders, has gone so far in resisting spellbinding slogans and rabble-rousings that they are made impotent by "distrust not only of all slogans and all tags, but even of all words . . . all statements of principle and conviction, all declarations of moral

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purpose." Is there any fundamental differences between his fifteen-year attack on criticism—criticism which is a normal function of intelligence and which any mature mind learns to accept, face, and master—and Goebbels' instructions of November 27, 1936, in which the criticism of art, literature, music, or drama "as hitherto exercised" was forbidden and "objective analysis and description" were prescribed in its place? Any difference but the obvious one: that Goebbels is in a position to see to it that all pretense of opinion or argument on the subject may be dismissed?

The misty nobility and lulling cadences (alternating with ranting defiance) of Mr. MacLeish's prose, its skill in giving the reader the sensation of sinking in a quicksand of question-begging claims and unanswerable righteousness, is one evidence of what his contempt for critical rigor has done to his own mental processes. But another evidence, and an even starker one, appears in his verse. It was necessary for Mr. Blackmur and every other honest critic to admit the serious motives and lyric felicities in his poetic output between 1927 and 1934, but the collapse of his poetry since the latter date has been an embarrassment to every earlier sympathizer. Elegiac and pathetic motives in poetry are at best precarious; they do not bear endless repetition; but when they are carried over into prophetic arrogance and metrical hot-gospelling, when they try to cope with immediate realities and complex public issues in terms varying from dire warning and bardic finger-pointing to lofty efforts to chart a new age of truth and humanitarian enlightenment, they are bound to end exactly where Mr. MacLeish's radio plays and public speeches have ended —in hollow strain, inflated rhetoric, and the empty heat of evangelism. Mr. MacLeish has tried all possible tones of voice in his role as public poet during the past ten years: music-hall wit in the *Frescoes,* portentous swank in *Panic* and *Air Raid,* sepulchral pathos in "1933" and "Pole Star for This Year," the Audenesque cabaret style in "The German Girls," platform pastiche in *Public Speech,* a kind of Frostian-Saroyanesque gnomery in "Colloquy of the States,"[49] and finally, as a reductio ad absurdum and grand medley of all these manners, the ghastly officious falsetto of *America Was Promises,* a poem whose cheap effects of phrasing, line-arrangement, and oracular vapidity are unbeatable in current poetry.

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The most unfortunate aspect of all this verse is its plea for recognition as something timely, urgent, imperative, man-to-man, nation-saving, and world-saving. Mr. MacLeish has apparently never heard of Yeats's dictum to the effect that it is only when poetry ceases being all these things, ceases being hortatory, didactic, compulsory, and unanswerable, that it becomes inevitable. *America Was Promises* is a text-book in error and tastelessness.[50] Not merely does it make a futile attempt to convert the method of pathos to the uses of moral exhortation; not only does it run into the ground all the devices of the patented colon, running period, rhetorical question, satirical capitalization, slangy Poundian tall talk and arty Yeatsian sublimity that have already, many times, betrayed the loose, amorphous, dream-struck pose of the poet's attitude, all things swooning toward a great glimmering equation of time, life, and destiny. It affects, with a familiar skill in mock self-castigation, to repudiate Mr. MacLeish's erring self, to turn his former allegiances into sins or lapses, to reduce the characteristic tragic or ironical images of the Twenties to absurdity, and to diffuse the critical intelligence or tragic recognition which those images contain into a large, all-embracing prophetic sentiment:

> The Aristocracy of Wealth and Talents
> Withered of Wealth and Talents
> Bred to sonsinlaw: insane relations:
> Girls with open secrets: sailors' Galahads:
> Prurient virgins with the tales to tell:
> Women with dead wombs and living wishes.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The weed between the railroad tracks
> Tasting of sweat: tasting of poverty:
> The bitter and pure taste where the hawk hovers:
> Native as the deer bone in the sand
>
> O my America for whom?

The synthetic hollowness of these lines is less than ever an adequate mask for their insincerity, and they are perfectly resolved in what follows: the name-waving Millayesque orotundity of "There is Spain Austria Poland China Bohemia," the creaking grandeur of "Listen! Brothers! Generation!" and of

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Believe unless we take them for ourselves
All of us: one here: another there:
Men not Man: people not the People:
Hands: mouths: arms: eyes: not syllables—
Believe unless we take them for ourselves
Others will take them: not for us: for others!

down to the panting fade-out of the finale:

Believe
America is promises to
Take!

America is promises to
Us
To take them
Brutally
With love but
Take them.

O believe this!

Mr. MacLeish's *Poems: 1924-1933* already gave his readers a difficult time in rescuing the lyrics of genuine beauty ("You Andrew Marvell," "Pony Rock," "L'An Trentiesme," "Ars Poetica," "Men of My Century loved Mozart") and the keen satirical pieces ("The End of the World," "Memorial Rain") from the mass of poems in which the virtues of these successes blurred out into a meanginless pathetic vapor ("Men," "Way-Station," "Tourist Death"), into mere word-sickness and fatigue ("& Forty-Second Street," "Before March," "Interrogate the Stones"), and especially into that pawky self-regard and carefully spotlighted embarrassment ("Cinema of a Man," "Reproach to Dead Poets," "Sentiments for a Dedication") which has been the cardinal symptom of Mr. MacLeish's personal insecurity and mistaken notion of identifying himself with his generation, his friends, his age, his past, his future—with almost anything but his immediate duty and difficulties. There is a fruitful passage in one of these poems[61] that seems to contradict this weakness only to emphasize it; it bears closely on the latest evolution of Mr. MacLeish's career:

I speak to my own time
To no time after

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I say Remember me Remember this one rhyme
When first the dead come round me with their whispering laughter

Ernest that saw the first snow in the fox's feather
They shall be dead together
Dos that saw the tyrants in the lime
Stephen that saw his wife
Cummings his quick fillies

Those of one man's time
Eliot the caul between the ribs of life
Pound—Pound cracking the eggs of a cock with the beautiful
sword of Achilles

I speak to those of my own time
To none other
I say Remember me Remember this one rhyme
I say Remember me among you in that land my brothers
O living men Remember me Receive me among you.

This strain is not often heard in serious poetry. Even in our self-commiserating age, where the inner life is passé and to

Be secret and exult
Because of all things known
That is most difficult

is a dishonored counsel, this accent of self-promoting agony is usually avoided by the proud and tough. But Mr. MacLeish's toughness was always a bit desperate at best

("O play the strong boy with the rest of them!
Be hard-boiled! Be bitter! Face the brassy
Broad indecent fact and with ironical
Contemptuous understanding take the world's
Scut in your hands and name it! Name its name!")[52]

and pride of any kind he feared less as a sin than as an isolation. He no longer pleads that Dos, Ernest, Eliot, Pound, and the rest of them should remember and receive him among them. His recent prose and verse suggest that he has quit that dubious company, with its discomforting skepticism, bad language, and effete anguish, for good. Mr. Wilson has suggested that "Mr. MacLeish is now an

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official himself; and he seems a little uneasy as to whether the utterances of officials will everywhere be taken quite seriously. It may be that he remembers that in the company he sometimes kept before he removed to Washington . . . such utterances were not always well received; and that he wants now to dissociate himself from that company."[53]

Another reason suggests itself: the men to whom Mr. MacLeish once pleaded for fellowship and remembrance had some respect for "the Word" in another sense than that of the cloudy capitalization he confers on it; whatever their individual sins and failings, they never expressed themselves with quite so repulsive and stomach-turning a flatulence as Mr. MacLeish applied to them, and the possibility naturally suggests itself that, his plea having been wasted on their ears, he turned to other pursuits than the tough ones of art. "Those who tell us the eternal poetry is the poetry written about the feeling of being dreadfully alone. . . . Those with the High Standards. . . . Those with the Love of Posterity. . . . Those who escape into mirrors"—all these have his "loud-mouthed, disrespectful, horselaughing" challenge.[54] He has found better company, and more of it. The "unborn generations" who once refused his fellowship are now his concern. He has taken nations into his charge. He is back with Mankind as his companion.

> It is no longer A MAN against the stars. It is Mankind: that which has happened always to all men, not the particular incidents of particular lives. The common, simple, earth-riding ways of hands and feet and flesh against the enormous mysteries of sun and moon, of time, of disappearance-and-their-place-knowing-them-no-more. The salt-sweating, robust, passionate, and at the last death-devoured lives of all men always. Man in the invisible sea of time that drowns him. Man in the sun, on the earth, under the branches—and, as he breathes, time sweeping him away. Not the "great," the "leaders," the brass-voices, but these men, these lives, and now death taking them. Not myself, my soul, my glycerine-dropping eyes, but these unknown and nameless men, anonymous under this sky, small in these valleys and far-off and forever there.[55]

No doubt everyone is affected in his own way by such transports as this. To at least one reader they always bring back a pas-

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sage in Shaw's music criticism,[56] written while he was reporting London concerts and operas for the *World* in the early Nineties:

> On Saturday afternoon the Albert Hall was filled by the attraction of our still adored Patti, now the most accomplished of mezzo-sopranos. It always amuses me to see that vast audience from the squares and villas listening with moist eyes whilst the opulent lady from the celebrated Welsh castle fervently sings, "Oh give me my lowly thatched cottage again." The concert was a huge success: there were bouquets, raptures, effusions, kissings of children, graceful sharings of the applause with obbligato players. . . .

IV

There can be no doubt in the minds of realistic and responsible men that the civilized world—and with it the democratic way of life and the Western culture on which it is founded—has arrived at a crisis of stupefying proportions. Mr. MacLeish's monster is not exaggerated. The violence, scale, and inhumanity of fascism make it, with its command of the modern instruments of force, a peril beyond any that has appeared in modern history. Fascism in all its forms, from Mussolini to Stalin, is the enemy of society as we know and live by it. Hitler and the Nazi machine are the danger upon which every speculation of future war—and of a durable future civilization—must be based. The point of urgent meaning to us now is not that this danger is unreal, that a crisis does not exist, or that the Nazis do not consider us their enemy. It is how far are we going to let them stupefy us.

Mr. MacLeish is one of a large number of Americans who believe that the threat to the democratic culture of England and America is so great that all qualifications of the American responsibility for defending democracy must yield to the immediate fact of danger. Criticism, historical judgment, intellectual detachment, and the moral discrimination of good and evil, causes and effects, must be suspended. The evil is here and now. It is later than we think. The house is afire. The gun is at our heads. Who started the blaze, how the gun came to be loaded, are points of perilously academic interest. Where this war originated; what was done by power politics between 1918 and 1939; what crimes of irresponsibility, shabby statesmanship, predatory state interest, commercial hostility, sham League of Nations tactics, and perversions of

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democratic privilege under the mask of imperialist, communist, or mercantile aggression were committed during those years; what punitive terms and long-nursed grievances, carefully plotted under the guise of trade protection and minority rights, went into the making of the Versailles Treaty; what was done by the victors of 1918 with the fattest victory in history and with the severe responsibilities attaching to such a victory; what the real causes of the war of 1914-18 were; what relation that war had to the problems of population, employment, and labor; what monstrous illusions of sanctimony, what "concept of infinity," were bred by the national successes of the Nineteenth Century and made the outbreak of 1914 not only a shock to the civilized world but an occasion for duping the public intelligence on a scale that entailed a reaction of extreme pessimism—these are questions which many people now prefer to dismiss.

It happens, however, that they are questions upon which our immediate prudence depends and to which any world that survives the war and hopes to make itself permanently inhabitable must return. They are questions implicated in the meaning of the civilization whose defense has again become the battle-cry of the democratic nations.

Mr. MacLeish defends, against all "passionate contempt," the "statements of conviction, of purpose, and of belief on which the war of 1914-18 was fought." It is true that in 1935 he declared that he would "do everything in my power to prevent the United States going to war under *any* circumstances," but as early as 1933 he saw little difference between the artist who subordinates the causes or passions of a moment to the interest of timeless truths and the "economic determinist" who considers only "the war of economic causes in which human suffering points only an economic moral, in which all events fit into an economic pattern and in which anything irrelevant to such a pattern is dismissed."[57] Recently he praised *The Ramparts We Watch* as a portrayal of the War not "in terms of the *actual* outcome, the happy ending," which deluded many into thinking it was won easily and thus justified skepticism and "passionate contempt," but "in terms of the *possible* outcome, the disastrous outcome, which loomed so large to those who faced it":

> The post-war generation, the generation which returned from

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> the war, sat back waiting for the hopes of the world to realize themselves in terms of a better, a more generous, a more democratic life. . . . And when they failed to materialize of their own motion, we pitied ourselves and told ourselves our sacrifices had been made in vain. The fact was in 1917—and the fact is today—that the defense of this democracy against an attack which would destroy its institutions is alone, and of itself, a cause worth fighting for.[58]

Yet the fact is also that in 1935 he said: "I would do everything in my power to prevent the United States from going to war under *any* circumstances."

It is hopeless to try to cope with Mr. MacLeish's statements when those of one year are set against those of another; it is often impossible to clarify his contradictions or ambiguities within a single essay.[59] But there is no mistaking the general tendency of his faiths, conversions, and moral veerings during the past twenty years. Unkind critics have suggested that he has himself been a prime example of the "literary 'irresponsible,' who feels that he can choose his moods as if they were suits from a well stocked wardrobe,"[60] and that "there isn't anybody smarter than Archie MacLeish when it comes to knowing how to pick out and fall into a good berth, or how to jump onto band wagons."[61] But there is perhaps a more poignant explanation of his case, one that makes his plight symptomatic of the spiritual condition of our times and his personal influence—now given power by his official rank in the nation—a remarkable index of the excitements that will probably land us in war more speedily than any other agency.

When Mr. MacLeish gave his loudmouthed horselaugh to those who write poetry "about the feeling of being dreadfully alone" he may have been bad-mannered but he was not insincere. He is obviously the type of man (the type is legion in our age) whose mortal dread is the fear of becoming isolated from his props and stays in society, from the great inclusive passions and enthusiasms of the human mass, from the protective embrace of a ruling idea, system, government, or cause. His favorite images are those of community, armies, races, and tribes. The loneliness of "You, Andrew Marvell" was only a passing phase—Riviera despair in the Twenties—but even that gave him the companionship of earth, skies, planets, night, and nothingness. Having come into the world with the rootless and liberated privileges of the well-to-do, he spent

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most of his life without the need or protection of a faith. The private citizen gets along with only moderate discomfort under such privation, but a poet requires his points of reference, a center of belief. Next to humanitarianism and nationalism, there is no faith so convenient, impressive, and heartening as faith in a war. It simplifies a great many difficulties. Good and evil suddenly become as concrete as black and white. Human beings become friends or enemies. Action is the order of the day. Thinking becomes secondary, or an impertinence. The flagging inspiration of authors, like the sagging lines on business charts, the boredom of life in general, and the listless fatigue of wage-slaves, finds itself picking up. Poets soon learn the value of this contagion; Miss Millay, though slightly slower than Mr. MacLeish, has been quick to repair her fortunes and join the cause.[62] Skeptics or persons with critical reservations are at once labeled fascist sympathizers or Fifth Columnists, with all the quick-trigger alertness to America's honor of a Walter Winchell trying to live down his former alliance with Broadway gangster circles. The fact that this time the potential enemy represents a new dark age is, after all, incidental. The latest enemy, danger, or war is always the worst and always provides an excitement and aggrandisement of personal importance greater than the last.

Mr. MacLeish's spiritual deflation of the Twenties, his fond brooding on the bliss of an infinite nothingness, were deceptive. They were current fashion then and he made the most of them, but he was always uncomfortable in the presence of the timeless interstellar immensities. Art, Love, Action, and Human Brotherhood soon took their place, and now it is Democracy, Liberty, Anti-Fascism, and America. The passionate values these words have been given by a world disaster compel Americans to hearken to Mr. MacLeish's message as they have never hearkened before. But as we recall the creeds he has sung in the past, the altars he has raised to beliefs and unbelief, we begin to wonder how long his present fervor will last, how much of his heart is in it, and if some day this faith too may not yield to something more in conformity with the latest headlines.

As our memory returns to the gospels he expounded in bygone days, it recalls that in 1923 he made his first and most sensational revelation of the hope by which the world was to be redeemed. In

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those years, it will be remembered, redeemers came in crops. Every other month brought to the shores of America some new dispensation or messianic light. If it wasn't Coué it was Count Keyserling; if it wasn't Conan Doyle it was Jiddu Krishnamurti; and home growths like J. B. Watson, Amy Semple Macpherson, and the Technocrats faced a stiff competition. But Mr. MacLeish, then in an earlier phase of his ordeal of discovering that it is a strange thing to be an American, produced a Messiah of his own. In May 1923, in *The North American Review,* he and a Yale friend, Lawrence Mason, announced "The Next Philosophy" to the world.[63] One reads it today with blinking eyes, yet it was no product of boyish credulity: Mr. MacLeish had passed the celebrated thirtieth year of his age when he published his discovery in words that put the ancient prophets to shame:

> The great philosopher of our generation will be an East-European, a Czech, and his name will be Peter Sczornik. For one who has read his first book, *The Lyric Tense,* no other verdict is thinkable. Here at last is a student of life, a creator of thought, a brain than which no intelligence of history is more acute, more luminous, more inevitable. Upon this one slight volume of eight hundred-odd pages, his glory rests forever secure. Beneath this one magnificent title his imperishable name will be written across the tablets of ten thousand libraries. He is one with the immortals. He is beyond our pens to praise or injure him. He is already great.

We learn that

> It is the glory of this great modern that he, and he alone, has found inherent in these phenomena [of life] themselves the laws that explain them. . . . It is his contention that the facts of life have written their own philosophy, which needs only recognition, not interpretation. That philosophy is the Philosophy of Grammar. Not only do the words and sentences occur and recur in obedience to the rules of grammar, but man himself and the ideas and purposes of man fulfill the ambit of those laws, bear the relations of those principles, are understood only in the light of those commands.

We are told that "the scope of Sczornik's project is indicated in the titles of his chapters; innumerable chapters in the Slavic fashion, bursting from silence with an epigram, ebbing back to

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silence upon a rhetorical question," and are thus taken through a detailed exegesis of these chapters: "Grammar: the Universal Solvent," "God: the Copula," "Nature: the Predicate," "Love: the Genitive," "Education: the Reflexive," "Man: the Idiom," "Society: the Circumlocution," "Death: the Period," "Immortality: the Infinitive," and thus to "full diapason upon 'The Lyric Tense,' the chapter which gives title to the volume." We hear that

> Upon the text, "Death: the Period," Sczornik preaches a paradoxical sermon of hope. Death is the period. It is not the dash of the psychologist, nor the comma of transmigratory philosophies, nor the semi-colon of Mohammedanism, nor the colon of Christianity. Still less is it the Finis and crossed dolphins of the skeptic. It is the period. But beyond the period the thought of man goes on, clothed in new capitals, indented to new paragraphs. . . . The same fire of hope goes on beyond the grave into the unknown. "Immortality: the Infinitive"—here is a symbol for the soul! The moving verb, the urge to become, launches us into space. . . .

and lastly that

> The final chapter, "The Lyric Tense," is worthy of its superb caption and of the volume it crowns. It is, in brief, a discussion of the aristocratic life. Grammaticalness is nothing: it is the merest morality. Style alone is the distinguishing quality of life. Greatness lies in manner and form, not in stiff correctness. . . . The whole framework of life erected upon grammatical laws exists only for the joy of that man who shall be great enough as stylist to destroy the order of dogma. From this Olympus, Sczornik surveys the pageant of humanity. "Great women live in Homerics: great men in the epigrams of the Anthology." "The career of Napoleon marched in resonant iambics to the lamest of feminine endings." . . . "Mr. Wilson is a ballade that forever repeats its one great line." . . . "Bolshevism, splendid and Platonic slang." To such gems of phrase what word of ours can lend lustre?

The mind may be excused for reeling before these paragraphs yet it must be noted how closely their tone and frenzy conforms to Mr. MacLeish's later visions of human salvation. This discovery of the mystic significance of the colon, dash, and period, this tub-thumping clamor of hosannas, this faith in pageants and the dim processions of history, this praise of "style" above "grammatical-

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ness" and "stiff correctness," this ecstasy about the Infinitive, Genitive, and Copula, are an almost perfect anticipation of his subsequent exaltations, and we suddenly behold in Peter Sczornik the mentor who, beyond Pound, Eliot, Perse, Cendrars, Frazer, Bernál Díaz, and Homer, shaped his mind and art.

Yet no sooner have we seized this clue to Mr. MacLeish's history than a startling suspicion detains us. Has anyone, before or since, ever heard of Peter Sczornik? Does he exist? Or is he the product of Mr. MacLeish's and Mr. Mason's fertile imaginations? No book by him is discoverable in the largest American libraries.[64] His name and works are not listed in the standard Czecho-Slovakian and European indexes, year-books, and philosophical journals. Eminent specialists, on consultation, are discovered to know nothing about him. The "French translation" on which "The Next Philosophy" purports to be based is as elusive as the original. Is it possible that Mr. MacLeish was perpetrating here a hoax—a conscious hoax—on the solemn editors of *The North American Review* and the great American public—a hoax projected with a defiant ardor and solemnity that correspond almost precisely to his later proclamations on verifiable topics?

Hoaxes are notoriously dangerous affairs. They are as likely to victimize their perpetrators as to deceive the public. They are symptomatic of compulsions or habits of temperament that exhibit themselves unconsciously in the other activities of their inventors. When we observe how closely the features of Peter Sczornik's revelation reappear in Mr. MacLeish's later gospels, how completely their doctrines satisfy his hunger for a creed, how true a projection they are of his search for a faith and a father, and how the language and symbols of "The Next Philosophy" have been transferred almost bodily to his later creeds and ukases, we begin to wonder whom—if Peter Sczornik is indeed a hoax—this hoax actually victimized, where the hoax ends, and how far the successive revelations of Mr. MacLeish's last seventeen years partake of the same dubious identity, now grown unconscious and ungovernable even to himself.

These questions present a problem of staggering proportions, which dismay prevents us from facing. But one aspect of Mr. MacLeish's plight consoles us. All of us need a faith and he inspires us, at the present desperate moment of history, with a desperate faith

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in the strongest possible common sense. Perhaps Montaigne can supply it at short notice:[65]

> Seeing, however, the miseries which have overwhelmed us (and for what we have not done!), I do not forthwith conclude that we are at the last gasp. The endurance of a state is apt to surpass our understanding. It is a puissant and mighty thing, and it often persists despite tyranny, unjust laws, corrupt rulers, and the license and sedition of its inhabitants. Our government is very sick indeed, but others have been more so, without dying. For my part, I do not despair.
>
> Meanwhile let us follow that great teacher Epaminondas, and boldly declare that there are some things not allowed, even in fighting an enemy; that the public interest does not require all things of all men; that all things are not permissible to a man of honor because he happens to be in the service of his king, his country, and the laws.
>
> This doctrine is fitting for our times. We have no need to harden our hearts with steel armor: enough if our shoulders are hardened. It will do to dip our pens in ink, without dipping them in blood.

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45) Rolfe Humphries, "Archibald MacLeish," *Modern Monthly*, June 1934, pp. 264-71; here 267.

46) R. P. Blackmur, "Mr. MacLeish's Predicament," *The American Mercury*, April 1934, pp. 507-8.

47) "Foreword" to *Poems, 1924-1933*.

48) *The Hound and Horn*, October-December, 1933, p. 147.

49) In the *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1939, pp. 484-7, and as yet uncollected; the other poems are from *Poems, 1924-1933*, *Public Speech*, or the books of verse-plays.

50) The following quotations are from the poem as it appeared in *The New Republic*, November 8, 1939.

51) "Sentiments for a Dedication," *Poems, 1924-1933*, pp. 76-7.

52) "The Hamlet of A. MacLeish," *Poems, 1924-1933*, p. 25.

53) *The New Republic*, July 1, 1940, p. 32.

54) *Poetry*, July 1938, p. 484.

55) "Nevertheless One Debt," *Poetry*, July 1931, 208-16; here 215.

56) *Music in London, 1890-94* (London, 1932), III, 3.

57) *The New Republic*, September 20, 1933, pp. 159-60.

58) Advertisement for *The Ramparts We Watch* in *Time*, August 26, 1940, pp. 42-3.

59) A special case of this, on which the reader may wish to express his wits, is the review of Laurence Stallings' *The First World War* in *The New Republic*, September 20, 1933, pp. 159-60. Malcolm Cowley's effort to wrestle with its arguments appears in a subjoined review of the review, pp. 160-1.

60) Edmund Wilson in *The New Republic*, July 1, 1940, p. 31.

61) Burton Rascoe in *The American Mercury*, November 1940, p. 372.

62) *Cf.* Millay, *Make Bright the Arrows* (New York, 1940).

63) Archibald MacLeish and Lawrence Mason, "The Next Philosophy," *The North American Review*, May 1923, pp. 698-704. The quotations following are from this.

64) Not in the collections of the Newberry Library, Chicago Public Library, University of Chicago; not in the New York Public Library or the Widener Library, Harvard University; also not found in the Library of Congress card-catalogues kept at the New York Public Library and the University of Chicago Library. The bibliographical and reference books of the Chicago and New York libraries, and particularly of the Slavonic Department of the New York Public Library, yield no name of *Szczornik* nor any possible transliteration thereof.

65) The closing quotation is from *The Autobiography of Montaigne*, edited by Marvin Lowenthal (Boston, 1935), pp. 306-7.

Since quotation always runs the risk of leaving the full context of an author's ideas unstated, the reader is urged to read the above books, articles, and poems complete wherever he feels that their complete meaning has been misrepresented. Mr. MacLeish's style imposes a severe labor on anyone who attempts to show his arguments by means of selected quotation.

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(*Continued from page 107*)

into the ditch, where he plumps down into the bloody water and cotton. The tribunal is ended and we, the soldier and I, shovel him under."

The explorer had bent his ear to the officer and, with his hands in his coat-pockets, observed the work of the machine. The condemned man was also observing it but without comprehension. He leaned over a little to follow the oscillating needles, when the guard, at a sign from the officer, slashed his shirt and trousers from behind with a knife so that they fell down off him. The man tried to seize the falling garments in order to cover his nakedness, but the soldier lifted him into the air and shook the last shreds from him. The officer brought the machine to a standstill and in the silence that now reigned the condemned man was placed under the harrow. The chains were undone and straps fastened in their place. Just at first it seemed almost to spell relief for the condemned man. Then the harrow settled down a bit lower, for he was a thin man. When the points touched him, a shudder ran over his skin; while the guard was busy with his right hand, he reached out blindly with his left; but it was towards where the explorer was standing. Uninterruptedly the officer kept looking at the explorer from the side, as if trying to read on his face the impression that the execution, which he had explained to him at least superficially, was making on him.

The strap intended for the wrist broke; the guard had probably pulled on it too hard. The guard showed him the broken bit of strap and the officer was obliged to help. Turning his face towards the explorer, he walked over to the guard and said: "This machine is quite complicated, here and there something is bound to tear or break; but one should not for this reason allow oneself to be misled as to one's general judgement. As a matter of fact, a substitute for the strap may be had promptly; I am going to use a chain, only the delicacy of the vibration of the right arm will in that case of course be reduced." And as he attached the chain, he added: "The means at my disposal for the upkeep of the machine are very limited now. Under the former commander there existed a fund intended only for this purpose, to which I had free access. There was also a warehouse here in which all kinds of spare parts were kept. I confess I was almost wasteful with them, I mean formerly, not now, as the new commander—to whom everything is only a pretext for combatting old institutions—asserts. Now he administers the Machine Fund himself, and whenever I send for a new strap the broken one is required as proof, the new one takes ten days to arrive, then it's of poor quality and not worth much. But in the mean time how am I to make the machine go without straps? Nobody bothers about that!"

The explorer reflected: It is always a delicate matter to intervene effectively in other people's affairs. He was neither a citizen of the penal

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colony nor a citizen of the state to which it belonged. If he wanted to condemn the execution, or even to prevent it, they could say to him: You are a foreigner, be silent. To this he would not be able to reply other than to add that as far as this matter was concerned, he didn't understand it himself, for he was traveling with the sole intention of observing and certainly not with that of changing foreign court procedures. But here, however, the situation appeared to be very tempting. There was no doubt about the injustice of the proceedings and the inhumanity of the execution. Nobody would assume that the explorer had any personal interest in the matter, for the condemned man was a stranger to him. They were not compatriots, nor was he at all a man who invited pity. The explorer himself had recommendations from high officials, he had been received with great courtesy, and the fact that he had been asked to the execution seemed even to indicate that they might desire his opinion concerning this procedure. This was all the more likely in fact since the commanding officer, as he had just heard distinctly, was not a partisan of this procedure and maintained an almost hostile attitude towards the officer.

At that moment, the explorer heard a cry of rage from the officer. Not without difficulty, he had just succeeded in shoving the felt gag into the mouth of the offender, when the latter closed his eyes in an irresistible nausea and vomited. Hurriedly the officer wrenched him away from the gag and tried to turn his head towards the ditch; but it was too late, the slop was already running all over the machine. "All this is the commander's fault!" the officer cried and shook the brass rods in front without rhyme or reason. "They're getting my machine as filthy as a stable." His hands shaking, he showed the explorer what had happened. "Haven't I tried for hours to make the commander understand that no meals should be given for a day before the execution? But the new, lenient tendency disagrees. The ladies of the commander's family stuff the man's mouth with sweets before he is led away. All his life he has fed on stinking fish, and now he has to eat candy! But it certainly would be possible, I wouldn't object, why on earth don't they get a new felt gag, as I have urged for the last three months? How can anyone take into his mouth, without loathing, a gag on which more than a hundred dying men have sucked and bitten?"

The condemned man had laid his head back and looked very peaceful. the guard was busy cleaning the machine with the condemned man's shirt. The officer walked towards the explorer, who took a step backwards in some sort of premonition, but the officer took his hand and drew him to one side. "I want to say a few words to you in confidence," he said, "may I?" "Certainly," said the explorer, and listened, his eyes lowered.

"This procedure and this execution, which you now have the opportunity to admire, no longer have any open adherents in our colony at present. I am their only advocate, as well as the only advocate of the old commander's legacy. I am no longer able to consider further improvements of the procedure, I exhaust all my strength trying to preserve what already exists. During the old commander's lifetime, the colony was filled

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with his adherents; I possess some of his strength of conviction, but I entirely lack his power; in consequence, the adherents have slipped away. There are still a good many, but nobody admits it. If you go to the tea-house today, that is on an execution day, and listen around a bit, you will perhaps hear only ambiguous utterances. These people are all adherents, but they are quite useless to me under the present commander with his present views. And now I ask you: Shall such a lifework as this"—here he pointed to the machine—"be allowed to perish just because of this commander and the women in his family who influence him? Can we allow this? Even though one is only on our island for a few days, as a stranger? But there is no time to lose, there is something afoot to undermine my jurisdiction; discussions are already taking place in the commander's office to which I am not summoned. Even your visit today seems to me to be characteristic of the entire situation; they are cowards, so they send you, a stranger, ahead of them. — How different the executions were in the old days! Already, a day before the execution, the entire valley was overcrowded with people; they all came just to watch; early in the morning the commander appeared with his ladies; a flourish of trumpets awakened the entire encampment; I made the announcement that everything was ready; the society people—no high official was allowed to be absent—took their places around the machine; this heap of wicker chairs is a miserable relic of those times. The machine was freshly painted and shone brightly, I used new spare parts for almost every execution. Before hundreds of eyes—all the spectators stood on tip-toe as far back as those slopes over there—the condemned man was laid under the harrow by the commander himself. What a common soldier is allowed to do today, was then my task, as presiding judge, and I felt honored by it. And now the execution began! Not a single discord disturbed the work of the machine. Many stopped looking, even, and just lay there in the sand with their eyes closed. Everybody realized: Justice is now being done. In the stillness only the sighing of the condemned man, muffled by the felt, could be heard. Today the machine no longer succeeds in wringing from the condemned man a sigh that is sufficiently loud for the felt not to stifle it. In those days, however, the writing needles dripped a corrosive liquid which we are not allowed to use today. Well, then came the sixth hour! It was impossible to grant all the petitions to be allowed to witness the spectacle from close by. The commander in his wisdom gave orders that the children should be considered first; of course I was always allowed to stand close by on account of my position; many's the time I used to crouch there with a small child in each arm. How we all absorbed the expression of transfiguration from the man's tortured face, how we lifted our cheeks into the glow of this justice, finally achieved and already fading! What times those were, comrade!" The officer had evidently forgotten who it was standing before him; he had embraced the explorer and laid his head on his shoulder. The latter was greatly embarrassed and looked impatiently beyond the officer. The guard had finished the cleaning job and was now

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pouring rice-porridge from a can into the tray. The condemned man, who seemed to have almost completely recovered, no sooner noticed this than he began to clack with his tongue for the porridge. The guard kept shoving him away, for the porridge was undoubtedly intended for a later moment, but it was nevertheless unseemly for him to put his dirty hands in the tray and eat out of it in front of the ravenous offender.

The officer quickly pulled himself together. "I was not really trying to touch your emotions," he said. "I know it is impossible to make those times comprehensible today. Besides, the machine still works and can speak for itself. It speaks for itself, even when it is standing all alone in this valley. And in the end, the corpse still falls with an unbelievably gentle flying motion into the ditch, even though there are no longer hundreds to gather around the ditch like flies, as there used to be. At that time we had to put up a strong railing around the ditch, but that has been torn down long ago."

The explorer looked aimlessly about him, wanting to keep his face from the officer. The latter, thinking he was looking at the barrenness of the valley, seized his hands and walked around him in order to catch his glance: "Do you see the shame of it?" he said.

But the explorer remained silent. For a little while the officer left him alone; with outspread legs and his hands on his hips, he stood still, looking at the ground. Then he smiled encouragingly at the explorer and said: "I was standing nearby yesterday, when the commander gave you the invitation. I heard it. I know the commander. I understood at once what he had in mind with that invitation. Although his power would be sufficient to take measures against me, he does not yet dare do so; but he wants to expose me to your judgement, as being that of a distinguished foreigner. He has made a careful calculation; this is your second day on the island, you did not know the old commander and his thought processes, you are prejudiced by the European point of view, you are perhaps, on principle, an opponent of capital punishment in general, and of such a machine-like type of execution in particular; furthermore you see how the execution takes place, without public sympathy, sadly, on a machine that is already somewhat damaged; now would it not be easily possible—this is what the commander thinks—that you should not approve of my procedure? And if you did not approve of it, would you not keep silent about it—I am still speaking from the commander's point of view—for you certainly have complete confidence in your own much tried convictions? You have surely seen and learned to appreciate the different peculiarities of many peoples, therefore you will in all probability not speak out with all your might against the procedure as you would, perhaps, do in your own country. But that isn't at all necessary for the commander. A haphazard, merely an incautious word suffices. It need not in any way correspond to your convictions, if only it appears to meet with his wishes. I am sure he will question you with all the cunning he possesses. And the ladies will sit around in a circle, all ears. You'll probably say: 'In our country the court pro-

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ceedings are different,' or, 'In our country the accused is examined before judgement is pronounced,' or 'In our country there are other penalties than the death penalty,' or, 'In our country there have been no tortures since the Middle Ages.' These are all observations that are as right as they appear self-evident to you; innocent observations that do not touch my procedure. But how will the commander take them? I can see him now, our friend the commander, as he pushes his chair aside and hurries to the balcony, I can see his ladies flocking after him, I can hear his voice—the ladies call it a thunder voice—as he says: 'A great occidental researcher designated to examine court proceedings in many countries, has just announced that our procedure in accordance with old customs is an inhuman one. After this judgement, pronounced by such a distinguished man, it is of course no longer possible for me to tolerate this method. Beginning today, I therefore issue the following order—and so forth.' You want to protest, you did not really say what he announces you did, you did not call my method inhuman; on the contrary, in your innermost thoughts you regard it as the most human and most worthy of humanity; you also admire this mechanism—but it is too late; you can't even reach the balcony, which is already crowded with ladies; you try to attract attention, you try to shout, but a lady's hand holds your mouth shut—and I, and the old commander's work, are lost."

The explorer had to suppress a smile; so the task he had regarded as being so difficult was really as easy as that. He said evasively, "You overestimate my influence; the commander has read my letter of introduction; he knows that I am no connoisseur of court proceedings. If I were to express an opinion, it would be the opinion of a private individual, of no more importance than that of any one else, and certainly much less important than that of the commander who, unless I am mistaken, has very extensive powers in this penal colony. If his opinion concerning this procedure is such a positive one as you believe, then, I am afraid that its end is indeed here, without there being any need of my modest cooperation."

Did the officer understand this? No, he did not yet understand. He shook his head vigorously and threw a brief glance back at the condemned man and the soldier, who was startled and let go of the rice. The officer came quite near the explorer, and without looking at him directly but at something or other on his coat, said more softly than before: "You don't know the commander; you are, as it were, under no obligations—if you'll pardon my expression—to him, or to us all. Believe me, your influence cannot be too highly estimated. I was indeed delighted when I heard that you were to attend the execution alone. This order of the commander was aimed at me, but now I am going to turn it to my own advantage. Uninfluenced by false insinuations and contemptuous looks—which would have been inevitable with a larger attendance at the execution—you have listened to my explanations, you have seen the machine and are now about to witness the execution. Surely your judgement is already formed;

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should there still be a few uncertainties in your mind, the sight of the execution will do away with them. And now I make this plea to you: help me with the commander!"

The explorer did not allow him to continue. "But how could I do that?" he cried. "That's quite impossible. I am as powerless to help you as to hinder you."

"You certainly can," said the officer. The explorer noticed somewhat anxiously that the officer's fists were clenched. "You certainly can," he repeated, still more insistently. "I have a plan that must succeed. You believe your influence is insufficient. I know it is sufficient. But allowing that you're right, isn't it necessary then to try everything, even what may possibly fail, in order to maintain this procedure? So listen to my plan. In order to carry it out, it is above all necessary for you to be as reticent as possible concerning your judgement of this procedure in the colony today. Unless someone questions you directly, you must by no means say anything; your utterances should be brief and vague; people should notice that it becomes increasingly difficult for you to talk about it, that you are acrimonious, that you practically have to burst into invective, were you to talk openly. I don't ask you to lie, in any sense; you should give only the briefest answers, such as: 'Yes, I've seen the execution,' or, 'Yes, I've heard all the explanations.' Only that, no more. Of course there is sufficient cause for the acrimony people should notice in you, even though it does not correspond to the commander's viewpoint. Of course he will misunderstand completely and give it his own interpretation. That is the basis of my plan. Tomorrow an important meeting of all the higher administrative officers will take place under the chairmanship of the commander at headquarters. The commander naturally knows how to make a spectacle out of these sessions. A gallery has been built which is always occupied by spectators. I am obliged to attend these consultations, but I am loath to do so. In any case, you will certainly be invited to this meeting; if you will follow my plan today, the invitation will become an urgent request. Should you not be invited, however, for some undiscoverable reason, you must ask for an invitation; you will get it then without any doubt. So tomorrow you're seated with the ladies in the commander's box. He reassures himself frequently, by looking upward, that you are there. After disposing of diverse indifferent and ludicrous subjects, calculated solely to interest the spectators,—mostly about port constructions, eternally about port constructions—the court procedure also comes up for discussion. If this point should not occur to the commander, or rather not early enough, I'll see to it that it does. I'll stand up and make a report of today's execution. Quite brief, only a report. Such a report is not customary, but I make it nevertheless. The commander thanks me, as always, with a friendly smile; and then he cannot restrain himself, he sees his chance: 'A report of today's execution has just been made,' he will say, or something similar to this. 'I'd only like to add to this report that this particular execution was attended by the great scholar, whose visit—an exceptional honor for

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our colony—you all know about. Our session today also takes on an added significance as a result of his presence. Let us now question this great scholar as to his opinion of this execution, carried out in accordance with early customs, as well as of the procedure that led up to it.' Naturally, applause throughout the house, and general approval; I am the loudest. The commander makes a bow before you and says: 'Then I put the question in the name of everyone present.' And now you step up to the balustrade. Lay your hands on it, so that they are visible to everybody, otherwise the ladies will take hold of them and dally with your fingers.— And now, finally, comes a word from you. I don't know how I shall stand the tension of the hours until that moment. You must place no limit on your speech, blare forth the truth; lean over the balustrade, bellow your opinion, yes, bellow it, at the commander, your unshakable opinion! But maybe you don't want to do this, maybe it does not correspond to your character; in your country people act differently in such situations; this too is all right; this too is quite sufficient; don't get up at all, say only a few words, whisper them so that they may be heard by the officials below you, that'll do. You needn't even mention the small attendance at the execution, the creaking wheel, the broken strap, the repulsive felt gag; no, I'll take care of everything else. And believe me, if my speech doesn't chase him from the hall, it'll force him to his knees, so that he will have to acknowledge: I bow down before you, old commander! — That's my plan; won't you help me to carry it out? But of course you will, what's more, you must." And the officer seized the explorer by both arms and looked into his face, breathing heavily. He had shouted the last sentences so loudly that even the guard and the condemned man became attentive; although they understood nothing, they stopped eating and looked towards the explorer, chewing the while.

The explorer had no doubt from the very beginning as to the answer he would have to give. He had experienced too much in his life to vacillate now; at bottom he was an honest man, and he was not afraid. Nevertheless, he hesitated, just the time of a breath, at the sight of the soldier and the condemned man. But finally he said what he had to say: "No." The officer blinked several times and did not take his eyes off him. "Do you want an explanation?" asked the explorer. The officer nodded silently. "I am opposed to this procedure," the explorer then said. "Before you even took me into your confidence—I'll not abuse this confidence, of course, under any circumstances—I had already considered whether I would be justified in taking steps against this procedure, and whether there would be the slightest prospect of success in case I did so. It was clear to me to whom I should have to turn first: to the commander, of course. You have made it still clearer, but without having strengthened my resolution; on the contrary, your honest conviction moves me, even though it could never influence me."

The officer remained silent, turned to the machine and, seizing one of the brass rods, leaned slightly backwards to look up at the draughtsman,

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as if to check whether or not everything was in order. The guard and the condemned man seemed to have become friends; the condemned man was making signs to the guard, despite the fact that the tight straps which bound him made this difficult: the soldier bent over towards him; the condemned man whispered something to him and the soldier nodded.

The explorer followed the officer: "You don't know yet what I am going to do," he said. "Of course, I shall give my opinion about the procedure to the commander, not at the meeting, however, but tête à tête; nor shall I stay here long enough to be drawn into any meeting: I am going away early tomorrow morning, or at least I'll board ship then."

It seemed as though the officer had been listening. "So the procedure did not convince you," he said to himself, and smiled as an old man smiles at a child's nonsense, withholding his own real musings behind the smile.

"Then the time has come," he said finally, and looked suddenly at the explorer, his eyes shining with a certain challenge, a certain appeal for cooperation. "Time for what?" the explorer asked anxiously, but received no answer.

"You're free," said the officer to the condemned man in the latter's own language. At first the condemned man did not believe it. "You're free now," the officer said. The face of the condemned man showed signs of life for the first time. Was this the truth? Or was it only a passing whim on the part of the officer? Had the foreign explorer obtained pardon for him? Which was it? His face seemed to ask these questions. But not for long. Whatever it might be, if he could, he really wanted to be free, and he began to shake himself as much as the harrow permitted.

"You're breaking my straps," the officer shouted. "Keep quiet, we'll unfasten them for you." And with the help of the guard, to whom he had made a sign, he got to work. The condemned man chuckled gently to himself, saying nothing; he turned his face first to the left towards the officer, then to the right towards the guard; not forgetting the explorer.

"Pull him out," the officer ordered the guard. To do this, they were obliged to move with a certain caution, on account of the harrow. The condemned man, due to his impatience, already had a few slight lacerations on his back.

From this moment on, however, the officer hardly bothered about him any more. He walked over to the explorer, took out again his small leather brief-case, rummaged through it, finally found the paper he was looking for and showed it to the explorer. "Read this," he said. "I can't," said the explorer. "I told you before I can't read those pages." "But take a good look at the page anyway," said the officer, stepping to the explorer's side to read with him. When this did not help, either, in order to facilitate the explorer's reading, he ran his little finger across the page, well above it, as if the paper must not be touched under any condition. The explorer made an effort, in order to be agreeable to the officer at least in this, but it was impossible. Now the officer began to spell out the writing, then he read it once more connectedly. "It says: 'BE JUST!'—Now you can read

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it," he said. The explorer bent so low over the paper that the officer drew it back, fearing he might touch it; actually the explorer said nothing more, but it was clear that he still had not been able to read it. "It says: 'BE JUST!' " the officer repeated. "That may be so," said the explorer, "I believe that's what it says." "All right then," said the officer, at least partially satisfied, and he climbed the ladder still holding the page; with great caution he laid it on the draughtsman, and then began apparently to rearrange the entire mechanism; it was a very tedious job, for the wheels in question must have been very tiny; sometimes his head disappeared completely in the draughtsman, he was obliged to examine the wheelwork so closely.

The explorer continued to follow the work from below, his neck grew stiff, his eyes began to smart from the sunlight-flooded sky. The guard and the condemned man were now occupied only with each other. With the point of his bayonet, the guard lifted up the condemned man's shirt and trousers which were lying in the ditch. The shirt was frightfully dirty, and the condemned man washed it in the water-pail. Both had to laugh aloud when the condemned man put the shirt and trousers on, for both garments had been slashed in two behind. Perhaps the offender thought it his duty to entertain the guard; in his slit clothes he made circles around the guard, who was crouching on the ground, laughing and beating his knees. Nevertheless they restrained themselves somewhat, out of respect for the presence of the two gentlemen.

When the officer had finally finished up above, he smilingly surveyed the whole in all its parts once more, banged shut the cover of the draughtsman, which until now had been open, climbed down and looked first into the ditch, then at the condemned man; noticed with satisfaction that the latter had recovered his garments, walked towards the pail to wash his hands, recognized too late the repulsive filth in it, became saddened at the fact that now he could not wash his hands, at last dipped his fingers in the sand—this substitute did not suffice but he had to accommodate himself—then rose and began to unbutton the coat of his uniform. At this, the two lady's handkerchiefs which he had stuck in his collar, fell into his hands. "Here, take your handkerchiefs," he said, and threw them towards the condemned man. In explanation he said to the explorer: "Gifts from the ladies."

In spite of the evident hurry with which he took off his coat and then undressed completely, he nevertheless handled each garment very carefully. He even let his fingers run over the silver cord on his tunic and shook one of the tassels straight. Yet it was little in keeping with this carefulness that, as soon as he had finished handling a garment, he immediately threw it into the ditch, with an angry gesture. The last thing that remained was his smallsword and belt. He drew the sword from its scabbard, broke it, then gathered everything together—the pieces of the sword, the scabbard and the belt—and threw them away so violently that they clinked together in the ditch.

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Now he stood there naked. The explorer bit his lips and said nothing. To be sure, he knew what was going to happen, yet he had no right to prevent the officer from doing anything. If the court procedure to which the officer was so attached really was about to be abolished—possibly as a consequence of the action which the explorer had felt obliged to take—then the officer was acting entirely rightly; the explorer would not have acted differently in his place.

The guard and the condemned man understood nothing at first; in the beginning, they did not even look on. The condemned man was overjoyed at having got back his pocket-handkerchiefs, but he was not allowed to enjoy them very long, for the soldier snatched them away from him with a quick, unpredictable gesture. The condemned man now tried once more to pull the handkerchiefs from the soldier's belt, into which the latter had carefully put them, but the soldier was on his guard. So they struggled, half in jest. Only when the officer was completely naked did they pay any attention to him. The condemned man especially seemed to be seized with a foreboding of some great change. What had happened to him, was now happening to the officer. It might even go on to the very end. Most likely, the foreign explorer had given the order for it. So this was revenge. Without himself having suffered to the end, he was nevertheless avenged to the end. A broad, noiseless laughter appeared now on his face, and remained there.

The officer turned towards the machine. If it had already been clear before that he understood the machine well, it was now almost horrifying to see the way he took charge of it, and the way it obeyed him. He had hardly brought his hand near the harrow when it rose and sank several times until it had reached the right position to receive him; he took hold of the bed by the edge only, and it started to vibrate right away; the ball of felt came toward his mouth. One saw that the officer did not really want to take it, but his hesitancy lasted just a moment, he submitted at once and took it in his mouth. Everything was ready, only the straps were still hanging down at the sides, but they were obviously unnecessary, as the officer did not need to be strapped in. Then the condemned man noticed the hanging straps; in his opinion the execution would not be complete unless the straps were tightly fastened; he waved excitedly to the guard and both of them ran to buckle the officer in. The latter had already stretched out one foot in order to push the crank that was to start the draughtsman going; then he saw that the two men had come near him. He drew his foot back and let himself be strapped in. Now, however, he was no longer able to reach the crank; neither the guard nor the condemned man would be able to find it, and the explorer was determined not to make a move. This was not necessary; hardly had the straps been fastened, when the machine began to work; the bed trembled, the needles danced on the skin, the harrow swung up and down. The explorer had been staring at it quite a while before he remembered that a wheel in the

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draughtsman should have made a creaking noise; yet all was silent, not the slightest hum was to be heard.

Because of this silent action the machine ceased to be the focus of attention. The explorer looked over towards the soldier and the condemned man. The latter was the more lively of the two, everything about the machine interested him; first he would bend down, then he would stretch himself, holding his index finger constantly extended to point out something to the guard. The explorer felt uncomfortable. He was determined to remain there till the end, but he could not have borne the sight of the two men very long. "Go home," he said. The soldier would, perhaps, have been ready to go, but the condemned man considered the order as a sort of punishment. He begged and implored with clasped hands to be allowed to stay, and when the explorer, shaking his head, refused to give in, he even went on his knees. The explorer saw that orders were of no avail here and he was about to go over and drive the two of them away. At that moment he heard a noise up in the draughtsman. He looked up. Could that one cog-wheel be giving trouble? But it was something else. Slowly the cover of the draughtsman rose and then fell wide open. The teeth of a cog-wheel began to show, then rose up; soon the whole wheel appeared; it was as if some great force were pressing the draughtsman together so that there was no room left for this wheel; it kept rotating till it reached the edge of the draughtsman, fell down, reeled upright a bit in the sand, then lay there. But already another one rose up above, followed by many more, big ones, little ones, and others that could hardly be told apart; the same thing happened to them all, one kept thinking that the draughtsman must surely be emptied by now, when a new, particularly numerous lot appeared, rose up, fell down, reeled in the sand and lay there. At the sight of this occurrence the condemned man forgot all about the explorer's orders; the cog-wheels completely fascinated him; he kept trying to seize one of them, at the same time urging the soldier to help him; but he withdrew his hand in fright, for another cog-wheel always followed at once, and this, at least at first when it would come rolling towards him, frightened him.

The explorer, however, was very disturbed; the machine was evidently going to pieces; its quiet action was a delusion; he had the feeling that he would have to care for the officer now, since the latter was no longer able to care for himself. But while the dropping of the cog-wheels had claimed his entire attention, he had neglected to watch the rest of the machine; now, however, when the last cog-wheel had left the draughtsman, he bent over the harrow, only to have a fresh, more annoying surprise. The harrow was not writing, it was just sticking the body, nor was the bed rolling it but just lifting it, trembling, up to the needles. The explorer wanted to interfere and, if possible, bring the whole thing to a stop, for this was not the torture the officer had wanted to arrive at, this was outright murder. He stretched out his hands. But at that moment the harrow was already beginning to rise sideways with the impaled body, the way it

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usually did only at the twelfth hour. Blood was flowing in a hundred streams, unmixed with water, for the little water pipes had also failed this time. And now the last thing failed too, the body did not release itself from the long needles, but, bleeding profusely, hung over the ditch without falling into it. The harrow was ready to fall back into its usual position, but, as if it had noticed itself that it was not yet freed of its burden, it remained suspended above the ditch. "Why don't you help?" the explorer shouted over to the guard and the condemned man, as he, himself, seized the officer's feet. He tried to hold the feet down on his side and the other two were to take hold of the officer's head from the other side, so that he might be slowly lifted off the needles. But the two could not make up their minds to join him; the condemned man practically turned away; the explorer had to go over to them and force them to come over near the officer's head. Just here he saw the face of the corpse, almost against his will. It was as it had been in life; no sign of the promised redemption was to be detected; that which all the others had found in the machine, the officer had not found; his lips were tightly pressed together, his eyes were open, and had an expression of life; their look was calm and convinced; the point of the big iron prong pierced his forehead.

When the explorer reached the first houses of the colony, with the soldier and the condemned man behind him, the soldier pointed at one house and said, "That's the tea-house."

On the ground floor of one house there was a deep, low, cavernous room with smoke-stained walls and ceiling. On the street side it was wide open. Although the tea-house differed little from the other houses in the colony, which were all very run-down, with the exception of the palatial structures that housed headquarters, it nevertheless gave the impression to the explorer of an historic memory, and he felt the power of other days. He walked nearer and, followed by his companions, he passed between the unoccupied tables standing on the street before the tea-house, and inhaled the cool, musty air which came from the inside. "The old man's buried here," said the soldier. "The priest refused him a place in the cemetery. At first they were undecided as to where to bury him, but they finally buried him here. I'm sure the officer did not tell you anything about it, for that was the thing he was most ashamed of. He even tried a few times to disinter the old man at night, but he was always chased away." "Where is the grave?" asked the explorer, who found it hard to believe the guard. Both the guard and the condemned man immediately dashed ahead of him and with outstretched hands pointed to the spot where the grave was to be found. They led the explorer straight to the back wall where customers were sitting at a few of the tables. They were probably longshoremen, sturdy looking men with short, glossy, full black beards. All of them were coatless, their shirts torn; they were poor humble folk. As the explorer approached, several of them rose, flattened themselves up against the wall and looked in his direction. "He's a foreigner," was the whisper that went

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about the explorer, "he wants to see the grave." They shoved one of the tables aside, underneath which there really was a tombstone. It was a simple slab, low enough to be hidden under the table. On it was an inscription in quite small letters, to read which the explorer was obliged to kneel down. It read: "HERE LIES THE OLD COMMANDER. HIS ADHERENTS, WHO MAY NO LONGER BEAR A NAME, HAVE DUG THIS GRAVE FOR HIM AND ERECTED THIS STONE. THERE EXISTS A PROPHECY TO THE EFFECT THAT, AFTER A CERTAIN NUMBER OF YEARS, THE COMMANDER WILL RISE FROM THE DEAD AND LEAD THEM OUT OF THIS HOUSE TO THE RECONQUEST OF THE COLONY. BELIEVE AND WAIT!" When he had finished reading, the explorer rose and saw the men standing about him and smiling as if they had read the inscription with him, had found it ridiculous and were calling upon him to join in their viewpoint. The explorer acted as though he had noticed nothing, distributed a few coins among them, waited until the table had been shoved back over the grave, then left the tea-house and walked towards the port.

The guard and the condemned man had come across acquaintances in the tea-house who detained them. But they must have torn themselves away soon after, for the explorer was no further than the middle of the long stairway leading to the boats, when they came running after him. They probably wanted to force the explorer at the last moment to take them along. While the explorer was negotiating with a sailor down below for his crossing to the liner, the two men rushed down the steps, silently, for they did not dare cry out. But when they arrived below, the explorer was already in the boat and the sailor was just about to shove off. They might still have been able to jump into the boat, but the explorer picked up a heavy, knotted tow-rope from the floor, threatened them with it, and thus prevented them from jumping.

(*Translated by Eugene Jolas*)

CONTRIBUTORS

EUGENE JOLAS edited and published *transition* for many years. He is now living in this country. . . . KARL J. SHAPIRO lives in Baltimore. In 1935 he published a volume, *Poems,* and has in preparation a second, *Trauma.* . . . HARVEY BREIT is a young poet living in New York City. . . . JEAN GARRIGUE writes us: "As for myself, it's a bit dull. Ex-University of Chicago, ex-Middlewest, ex-London, ex-Paris, ex ex, et c'est tout." . . . MILTON KAPLAN lives in New York and has had poems published in the *New Republic, Poetry World, Prairie Schooner,* and other periodicals. . . . GEORGE ORWELL is an English critic and political writer who fought with the Loyalist army in the Spanish civil war, and whose collection of critical essays, *Inside the Whale,* is being published by *New Directions* this Spring. . . . RAYNER HEPPENSTALL is an English writer whose latest novel is *The Blaze of Noon.*

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Letters

NEW DIRECTIONS & THE R.A.F.

Sirs:

I have a debt of gratitude to both PARTISAN REVIEW and James Laughlin of *New Directions*, because they alone seem to think my work worthy of a public. It is painful to have to call on one of my benefactors for a notice against the other. But a certain scrupulousness — by no means excessive considering the importance of the issue and the responsibilities of the conscience—compels me to disclaim any relation between my pieces in the new *New Directions* and the dedication of the volume to the Young Men of the Royal Air Force.

The metaphysical status of editor and authors in such an anthology of new writing is dubious, but I suppose we'd agree that since the attention of the reader is centered mainly on the contents of the book rather than on the selection of the contents, there is a presumption that the dedication in some way expresses the opinion of the authors (who obviously have no mutual opinion).

If the dedication were only an expression of admiration of courage and skill, who could object to it? But the preface presents a complex theory of the relations between free culture, old and new economic systems, defense against fascism, etc., largely in the manner of Harold Laski. Everywhere in this theory are beliefs only plausible to me. Most important: if the aim of the R.A.F. is solely to defend free culture, I doubt if it will defend free culture. At least I would never express opinions on such a point except in the ambiguity and the colors of fiction.

Yours truly,
PAUL GOODMAN.

New York City.

In reply to Mr. Goodman's letter, Mr. Laughlin writes: "Naturally the dedication is my personal expression. Any one looking at the book can se it is not a group, any more than O'Brien or Moult is a group. Perhaps I should have made this clear however right on the dedication page."

MORE ON PR

In our last issue we invited our readers for comment on the magazine, which is now entering its fourth year under the present management. We have received no letters as thorough and illuminating as Mr. Porter's, but a number of brief comments have come in. Below we print some of them, and again renew our invitation for more. We're slightly embarrassed, by the way, at the uniformly favorable tone of the comments received so far. Doesn't any one heartily dislike (with reasons) some or all of the magazine? — THE EDITORS.

Since you ask for comments, I'll say that I find every issue astonishingly vigorous—here it's not a question of agreement but simply of perception—and I hope these miracles continue to occur regularly. Everyone else is getting flabbier and flabbier.—PAUL ANDRESEN, Washington, D. C.

As a very new subscriber, may I say that I am quite pleased with PARTISAN REVIEW? The exact affirmation certainly has its points: to agree or disagree is almost a new pleasure after the liberal weeklies. It seems to me that the latter agree with themselves only in time of war when they come out for full war ahead! Otherwise, it's this or that, & weigh it in the scales, & guess who wins.—JAMES WHITING SAUNDERS, Alexandria, Virginia.

PR is the best thing of its kind I've ever come across, and I've been buying 'literary magazines' since 1907 or thereabouts in London, Paris, and N. Y. C. In fact, I believe I have read every literary mag. published since 1907. The P. Rahv and M. Schapiro pieces in the last issue were top-hole, also J. T. Farrell's two cents' worth.—GEORGE C. AULT.

The English literary scene is gloomy: those young men who are still writing are waiting for an American public or a non-existent public. I disagree with PR's politics, but Lord! how we need an intelligent left literary publication here. . . .—ROY FULLER, London, England.

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It is extremely important that you go on with the magazine. It is one of the few bright spots left on a rapidly darkening continent.—SCOTT NEARING, Chicago, Ill.

FOOTNOTE ON MacLEISH

Sirs:

In your last issue I particularly enjoyed Morton D. Zabel's article on MacLeish. While there is yet time, before this paralysingly successful Irresponsible coordinates us all, I hasten to supplement Mr. Zabel's admirable compilation with a few notes:

In the Spring of 1937 I was briefly employed by *Fortune* and used my acquaintance and association with MacLeish, then a *Fortune* editor, to deprecate his political acrobatics. Specifically, I called his attention to the fact that the Congress of American Writers and the League of American Writers were Stalinist front organizations from which all writers who had been critical of the Communist Party were rigorously excluded; this, although the call to the Congress had invited the participation of all liberal and radical writers who supported the Loyalist cause in the Spanish civil war. At my suggestion, MacLeish personally verified the fact of this exclusion by going to the then-secretary of the League of American Writers; he reported that the secretary had snarled "Trotskyist" at the mention of my name and others, such as Susanne La Follette and Benjamin Stolberg who had earned the Party's hatred by serving on the Dewey Commission to investigate the Moscow trials. But this did not deter MacLeish; neither did my argument that the ethics of the writing craft scarcely permitted his complaisant participation in what was obviously a disingenuous maneuver, conducted by a Party whose contempt for the Word was notorious.

What happened, of course, was that the Party cynically kidnapped and exploited the prestige and faith of politically inept intellectuals in America, just as it kidnapped and manipulated the Loyalist government. In his speech quoted by Zabel, MacLeish is seemingly replying to an exposure of the Congress which I published in the *Socialist Call* a few days before it opened. But I would quite agree that MacLeish was not duped or "used" on that occasion. He acted with full knowledge and consent. Indeed, it would appear that the danger of rape is one from which MacLeish is peculiarly exempted.

Sincerely,
JAMES RORTY.

Flatbrookville, N. J.

HEMINGWAY'S ENDING

Sirs:

I thought Lionel Trilling's review of Hemingway's last novel was very interesting and *subtile*. But I am surprised that no review I have seen has stressed the perhaps unimportant shoddiness of the ending, in which the hero, to avoid the ignominy and cowardice of suicide, fortuitously is given the chance to invite murder instead. This seems to my way of thinking a cowardly and ignominious way of avoiding the moral dilemma. Or am I just a trifle crazy?

Very truly yours,
MARGARET DE SILVER.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

ADD EUROPEAN CHECK-LIST

Sirs:

In regard to your check-list, I append: *Gide* is in Nice, according to the French Embassy in Washington; *Kokoschka* is believed dead, which may perhaps be verified through the Museum of Modern Art (N.Y.C.); *Valéry* and *Duhamel* have been reported everywhere from Morocco to Chataqua, and are most likely in Paris.

Yours very truly,
S. H. POSINSKY

New York City.

Sirs:

One European writer whom you didn't mention is Céline. I wonder if the timeliness of his anti-Semitism has won him Nati decorations and even perhaps a position as the Archibald MacLeish of occupied France, or has he kept his mouth shut, or is he already at odds with the Germans? You might include him in a future check-list.

Yours truly,
PAUL ANDRESEN

Washington, D. C.

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